

PlayStation[®]

Official Magazine - Australia



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Icon ■ Splinter Cell:
Double Agent and more!

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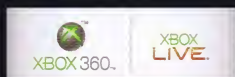
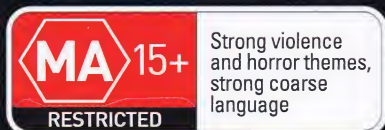
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- ◆ Varying manifestations of the Darkness allow you to devour, impale or implode your enemies.
- ◆ Cannibalize the corpses of your slain victims and transform them into Darklings – impish and hilarious demonites that commit unspeakable acts.
- ◆ The absence of light feeds and replenishes the Darkness so seek the shadows wherever possible.
- ◆ Fight your way through the dark and seedy underbelly of New York City as well as the ethereal realm of the Darkness.
- ◆ Play as Darklings in online multiplayer games and face other players in traditional multiplayer modes as well as all-new innovative game modes.
- ◆ Developed by the team behind the award winning, "The Chronicles of Riddick: Escape from Butcher Bay".

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PLAYSTATION 3



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PLAYSTATION 3

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The Elder Scrolls IV

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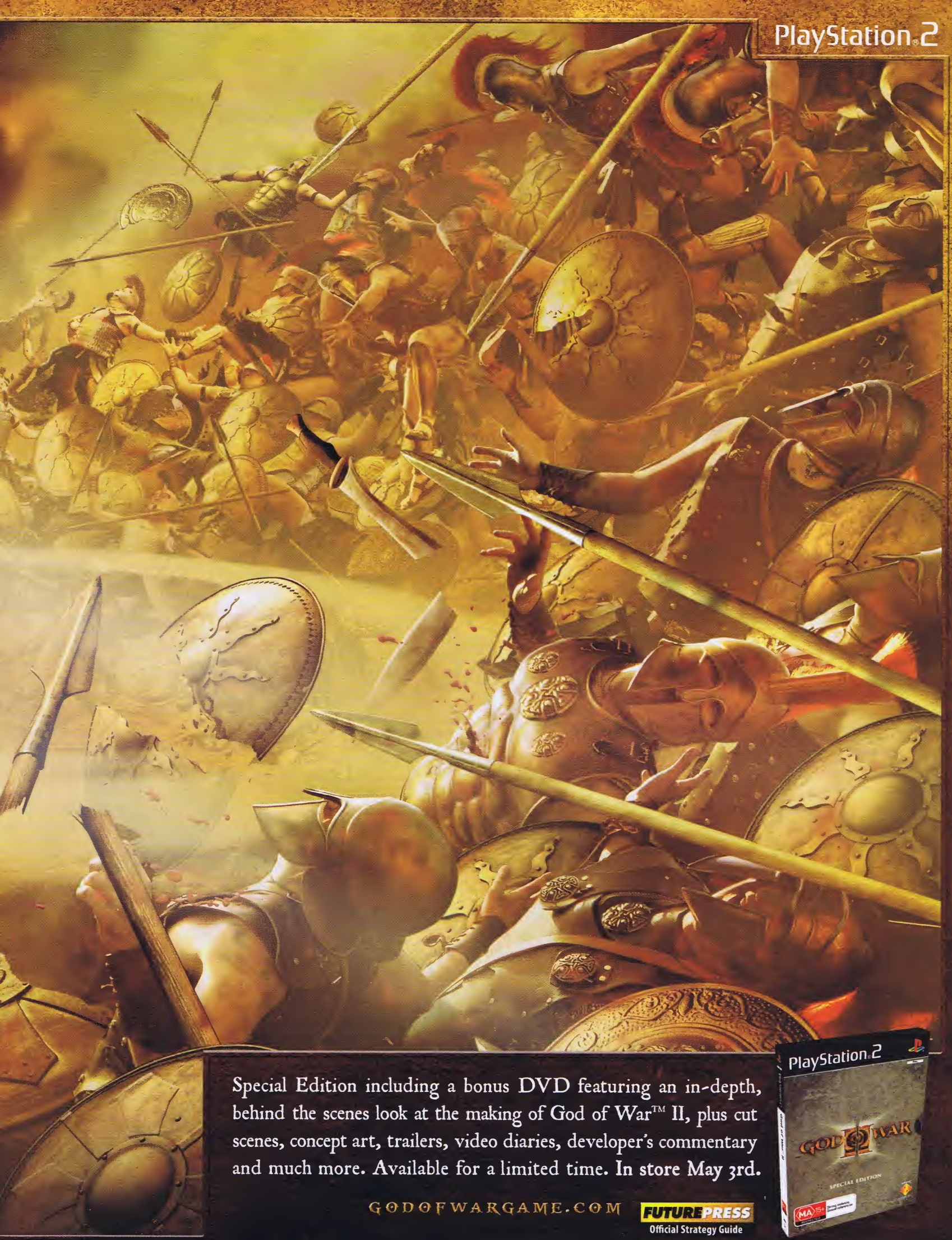
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Strong violence,
Sexual
references



PlayStation 2



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Official Strategy Guide



EDITOR'S LETTER



Taking your PS3 online really does add a whole new dimension to your games. Having previously finished the two standout launch titles, *MotorStorm* and *Resistance*, I wasn't sure which new game I was going to get stuck into at launch. After a quick burn through a few online races with *MotorStorm* I realised that the week I'd spent belting through the singleplayer game had only scratched the surface of the full *MotorStorm*

experience. My two favourite PS3 games, ones that I considered done and dusted, were suddenly every bit as exciting as they were when I first started them. I just picked up a USB headset this morning too, so my fellow *MotorStormers* are going to be hearing a lot more than just my squeaky suspension as I drive over them!

As much as PS3's existing online gaming has already rocked my world, the sneak peak Sony has revealed of its future plans for online gaming makes the current setup look like a bunch of smoke signals... at night. By the end of the year PS3's Home system will have us forgetting we ever got by with text-based menus and lobbies for online gaming. And even the brief glimpse we've had of *LittleBigPlanet* was enough to establish that it could be the biggest game of the next generation. Check it out on page 16.

NARAYAN PATTISON
Editor

Narayan Pattison
PS3 online: **The_Duude**

WHAT SUPER POWER WE'D PICK...



LUKE REILLY

Incredible healing powers. I'd need adamantium bonded to my skeleton too, but imagine being able to absorb BULLETS? Rad. Healing powers narrowly beat out shapeshifting – turning into Scarlett Johansson to look at yourself in the mirror is both 'weird' and 'maladjusted'.

PS3 online: **Capt_Flashheart**



MARK SERRELS

I choose the power of 'beard'. Yeah it would be cool to fly or have X-ray vision, but I want the ability to grow the sort of facial rug my old science teacher used to sport – at will. But no moustaches, that's gay. Only Burt Reynolds and Tom Selleck can do moustaches.

PS3 online: **Serrels**



PHILLIP JORGE

Has to be invisibility. My mates'd be like "Dude, Scarlett Johansson gets her happy sacks out in this movie!" But I'd be like "Doesn't matter 'cause I've already seen 'em." Plus I'd save a fortune in dental bills no longer getting caught peering by my girlfriend.

PS3 online: **PhilLipO**



NICK O'SHEA

Well, if vast wealth like Tony Stark or Bruce Wayne isn't an option, then I'll have to go for super speed. I'd never need to commute or pay insane petrol prices again, and any food/beer runs would be lightning fast, maximising game time with my shiny new PS3.

PS3 online: **Sidochrome**



ANTHONY O'CONNOR

Shooting lightning out of my fingers. Imagine some dude gets narky about you talking to his missus. "Oh I'm sorry, is this your girlfriend? Why don't I make your beer explode with my LIGHTNING FINGERS OF DOOM?! You like that? Who's the bitch NOW, matey?"

PS3 online: **stoxxy**



DAVE KOZICKI

I'd have to go with awesome power of drunken-ness. It instils the false confidence and bravado of ten men, is impervious to rejection and bouncers and supersedes that measly X-ray vision with the incredibly potent beer-goggle vision.

PS3 online: **ko-zee-ii**

PlayStation®

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SHOUT OUTS: Rockstar – you've done it again! Shane and AJ – champions! Everyone who keeps letting us beat them at *MotorStorm*.

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WHAT'S MORE BRUTAL
YOU OR THE TRACK?



PLAYSTATION 3

NEWS

SCREENSHOT OF THE MONTH

Edited by Mark Serrels


LittleBigPlanet on PS3 • Home • Resistance:
Fall of Man update • Transformers
Interview with Seth Green and more...

ENORMOUS DANGER SNAKE!

Sadly this is the first time we've heard these words (c'mon ladies throw us a bone here!). The enormity of this bad guy is awe-inspiring. We can't think of any game that has featured a boss *this* big, and still managed to retain the insane amount of detail that *Lair* has. Man we can't wait to see this running on our HDTV.

IN THE BACKGROUND...

Lair might have you spending the majority of your time in the sky, but that doesn't mean that what lies beneath has to be any less detailed. On the contrary my dear reader, the reverse is true. *Lair* features the best videogame water effects we've seen, and look at the detail in those mountains. Mmmmm. Delicious.



HE'S A LITTLE ON THE SMALL SIDE...

How we wish that was the first time we'd heard *those* words... It's a testament to the enormous scale of *Lair* that the main character in the game plays such a small role in this screenshot. *Lair* is set to feature the largest bosses this side of *Shadow of the Colossus*.

FLAME ON!

So we all know that dragons can blow ungodly amounts of fire anywhere they damn well please; good to know then that *Lair* has some of the most realistic fire ever seen. Throw another shrimp on the barbie – cause this guy's toast.



■ The animated version of The Village People was a huge failure. Mostly due to the fact they forgot to add facial hair. Big mistake



PS3 PS2 PSP

A WHOLE NEW WORLD

Is it little or is it big? It can't be both damn it!

The US-based GDC was a pretty big win overall for Sony, with the unveiling of Sony's new Game 3.0 concept, but the undoubted star of the show was *LittleBigPlanet*, which could quite possibly turn out to be one of the weirdest, most ingenious games ever created. In keeping with the name *LittleBigPlanet*, the demo shown at GDC starts small, beginning with the display of an insanely detailed sock puppet character, but eventually goes huge by showing us a gaming environment that players have an unprecedented level of control over.

The aim of *LittleBigPlanet* is a bit vague, there is no real set

way to play, just an incredible, free-form game space in which players can create and play in their own little world. Characters can interact with the environment in an endless variety of ways, but can also help design and shape this environment. Players can use the game to create levels, complete with numerous obstacles and puzzles, and then send these designs to other gamers. In the short demo we watched the creators of *LittleBigPlanet* play through a level created using the simple tools, and we have never seen anything like it.

But describing *LittleBigPlanet* is ultimately useless, this is a game that literally has to be seen

to be believed. It has a gorgeous stitched together charm that somehow still manages to display the awesome power of the PS3, but over and above aesthetics the game's potential, from an online community perspective, is huge. The creative tools are just so accessible, and there is absolutely no limits or boundaries on what you can create. Sony plans to create leaderboards of the most interested and widely played levels created by players. Basically the only limit in *LittleBigPlanet* is your own imagination.

LittleBigPlanet is due for release on the PlayStation Network at the end of the year, with hard copies arriving in 2008.

PS3 PS2 PSP

BACK TO THE FUTURE

We've got to go back Marty (um, we can't Doc...)

While NTSC PS3 owners are currently enjoying 100% compatibility with the PS1 and PS2 back catalogue, it seems that both Aussies, and those crazy Europeans, will have to withstand another firm kick to the groin from Sony. Despite the fact that we have been waiting an extra four months for Sony's latest tech, it turns out that the PS2 hardware built into the PS3, enabling backwards compatibility for almost all PS2 games, is absent in the PAL PS3 set up.

But before you start rioting and suicide bombing Sony's head office, there is some light at the end of the tunnel. The PS3 will still allow backwards compatibility for a huge range of PS2 titles, and almost all of the PS1 games. Through software emulation programmes a huge number of games will still be playable via the 1.60 firmware update.

PS3 PS2 PSP

THE HUMBLE RUMBLE

Although the lack of rumble on the new PS3 SIXAXIS controllers is arguably a non-issue (most gamers will hardly notice the difference) the crazy legal issues surrounding the removal of the feature have now been resolved. Yep, that's right, Sony and Immersion (who sued for patent infringement) have showed each other some sloppy man love, kissed and made up.

Although this doesn't necessarily mean that we will definitely be

seeing rumble added to the SIXAXIS, it's looking pretty likely that the PS3 controller will be shakin' and bakin' before too long. Sony top dog Kaz Hirai claimed that Sony was excited about its "new partnership with Immersion and the potential for new and innovative products incorporating its technologies." So it's looking like a pretty firm bet that it's only a matter of time before the SIXAXIS will be rumblin' with the best of them.



PS3 PS2 PSP

HOUSE TRAINED

Home is where the heart is...

The development of *Home*, an attempt to create a more user-friendly gateway to online gaming and more, was one of many major announcements Sony made at GDC. Basically an online gaming lobby turned up to 11, *Home* gives you your own virtual bachelor pad and allows users to create a character to live in that space. From here gamers can pretty much do anything: organise online games, chat with each other, or just wander aimlessly, it's pretty much up to you.

After being assigned with your own 'apartment' you can invite others over to visit, and show off things like your 'hall of fame', which is essentially a virtual trophy room dedicated to all your gaming achievements. This apartment is ripe for customisation, and users can fill their apartment with furniture, artwork, and pretty much anything else you can think of. More like a personal, playable

version of *The Sims*, *Home* is an attempt to broaden the scope of online communities, allowing players to meet, communicate, and share media. Users can display their pics and videos via home, in a virtual environment. Thanks to Sony you can finally dump all your annoying, clingy friends in the crappy 'real world', and stay *Home* all day chatting to hot cyberbabes like Kip from *Napolean Dynamite*. Swweeeeeeeeet...



PS2 GIVEAWAY

ONLY GAME IN THE VILLAGE

Little Britain is one of the funniest shows to come out of Britain since... um... well you'd probably have to go as far back as *Monty Python* or *Blackadder* to find something that registers anything above a titter (jeez British TV sucks). Well, in case you didn't know, Blast Entertainment has recently blessed us with a *Little Britain* game, and courtesy of Red Ant we have ten of those bad boys to give away. All you have to do is answer this simple question, send the answer to us under the headline 'Little Britain giveaway' and follow the entry details below.

QUESTION: One member of the *Little Britain* team recently swam across the English Channel for charity. Which one was it?

- A. The short, fat one
- B. The tall, lanky one.

HOW TO ENTER

Send entries to ops@derwenthoward.com.au with the name of the competition in the subject line, or post them to OPS Magazine, PO Box 1037, Bondi Junction, NSW 1355 with the name of the competition CLEARLY MARKED on the envelope. Also Include your name, age, email address, contact number, and more importantly, your full address and postcode! All competitions close May 22. All competitions are open to residents of Australia and New Zealand. Only one entry per person for competitions.

PlayStation 2



Little BRITAIN THE VIDEO GAME



M

Moderate themes

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FEATHER PLUCKIN' INSANE

OPS chats to *Robot Chicken* gurus Seth Green and Matt Senreich

OPS: Your backgrounds seem to be quite different, how did you guys meet?

Matt: I actually used to work for a magazine called *Wizard*, which is all about comic books, toys and videogames and the like.

Seth: And I used to read those magazines.

Matt: So I did an interview with Seth, gosh, it must've been about 10 years ago now and when I did we just ended up becoming friends after that interview and it kind of led to this crazy career change for me.

Seth: And I had an idea about producing a stop-motion short and approached Matt about producing it with me because he had so much experience in the field of toys and videogames and the underlying properties I wanted to play with. We were just the perfect yin and yang. We fell in love and the rest is history.

Matt: [laughs]

OPS: And what about the name? Is it really named after a Chinese meal?

Seth: Yeah, it's kinda sad actually – we were in production of the first season before we came up with a useable title and we submitted, like, over 40 titles to [adult swim] and they rejected every one of those even nicknaming us the bad title factory at one point. So while we were writing the first series we ate from the same Chinese restaurant almost every day and got take out and one of the items on their menu was Robot Chicken and we thought that really ridiculous, it was a ridiculously named item so we submitted that almost as a joke and it wound up becoming their favourite title.

Matt: We were called the Bad Title Factory 'cause we, all the... er, yeah, oh, did you say that already? Okay. Nevermind, I'm just repeating myself. Or... himself.

OPS: We've noticed that many of the people who've done voice acting for the show are people you've worked with in the past – is it easy to convince them to come in and voice an action figure?

Seth: Yeah, it's easier than you'd think actually. I mean, our show's a lot of fun to do, it doesn't take any time and it allows people to play parts that they'd never get to play on camera. Voiceover acting is so different to on-camera performing because you're not beholden to what you can be physically; you just have to perform in a certain way. We offer people the opportunity to come in and be really silly and have a lot of fun, and people are really interested in doing it. Plus we can go anywhere: we're practically mobile.

OPS: Do either of you have any particular favourite sketch from season 1?

Matt: Mine's still the World's Most One-sided Fistfights film. Um, I just like violence. [laughs]

Seth: We got to do a bit, the overall sketch isn't my favourite, but we had Burt Reynolds and Dom DeLuise come in and reprise their roles from *Cannonball Run* and even improvise some outtakes for us and that was an incredible experience.

Matt: We've just been lucky to play with a lot of people that you just wouldn't expect to come in and do this sort of childish humour.

OPS: The show tends to avoid political issues, instead mocking pop culture. Do you think this has contributed to its success?

Matt: You know, it's one of those things where we don't necessarily avoid political commentary, we just kind of simplify it in a way. I mean, George Bush shows up on our show but we kind of take a certain approach where we just genirify him to what his core essence, we think, would be.

Seth: Instead of really making a political comment about any of his politics or policies we just have him act like a five-year-old.

Matt: And Bill Clinton just takes on the impression of a college frat guy.

is it tough gig? Long hours?

Matt: [laughs]

Seth: [laughs] It really is. We're in production of the third season right now and we have 20 weeks straight of writing and in that period of time we write the material for 20 episodes. We have about an 11-month schedule to produce 20 shows.

Matt: It's pretty laborious. You know, the hours, I'm at the office probably about 7:30 in the morning, same with Seth, and I would say we're probably out of here by about 7:30, 8:00 at night – and that's on a good day.

OPS: Did you anticipate it becoming such a cult favourite?

Matt: Not at all.

Seth: No, we're really thrilled, we're producing a 15-minute, ad-sponsored, late-night cable show so there's really no expectation of it finding an audience let alone any kind of success. But, you know, DVD has a way of getting people interested and with the Internet the way stuff gets sent around and traded. We hear about our stuff getting viewed in Japan and it's just really... exciting.

“We're making silly stuff and it's just funny to think anybody's watching it.”

Seth: He was the popular guy in school that everybody wanted to hang out with, both girls and guys, so we just make him the coolest, hippest dude in the world.

Matt: But we like to just simplify it because you have shows out there like *South Park* that really get into the nitty-gritty of the politics of it all, and they do such a good job with it that if we were gonna do something like that you have to beat it. So we'd rather take it in a different direction and do the best we can.

Seth: We're just out to have fun. We're playing with toys.

OPS: What about behind the scenes,

Matt: We're making silly stuff and it's just funny to think anybody's watching it.

OPS: Anything else you'd like to say for your fans?

Matt: We love Australia. We're pretty excited that the show's getting seen and heard about there and we are looking forward to hearing what people think.

Seth: Wooooo...

Matt: We're trying to find a way that we can sneak out there at some point to promote it, it's just that I don't know whether our writing schedule will allow for it! [laughs]



Seth Green photo copyright NBC/Warner Bros.



Compressed fun

THE TOP TEN

Sickies you can pull to play more PS3...

1. Leprosy

A bit medieval and antiquated, but totally convincing. We suggest gluing porridge oats to your face for a bit of authenticity.

2. Bird Flu

So totally hot right now. This disease is at the height of fashion, so you can easily reap all the benefits that come with it: celebrity girlfriends, photo deals, an interview on *Rove*. Awesome.

3. Gonorrhea

Painful, disgusting, and so personal in nature that no-one will ever question its authenticity. Will reduce your chance of scoring with the ladies though.

4. The Common Cold

An oldie, but a goodie. The common cold will buy you at least a couple of days of PS3 goodness.

5. Death in the Family

Tasteless, but effective. You can't pussy out on this one; you have to go the whole ten yards. No-one gives a shit if your dog died. It has to be a sibling.

6. Necrotizing fasciitis

Like bird-flu, this disease was once all the rage in the party scene, but has since faded into obscurity.

7. Mad Cow Disease

This disease has a really cool name, so when you call up your boss to pull the sickie, he will no doubt be impressed. You'll have to be extremely adept at mimicking motor dysfunction though.

8. Schizophrenia

Unless you are Marlon Brando (which you probably aren't, since he's dead) mental illness is particularly hard to pull off. We recommend some acting practise before attempting this.

9. Pregnancy

If you can pull this one off then you've totally hit the jackpot. Nine months off minimum, and all the bonuses of maternity leave.

10. Food Poisoning

The daddy. Nothing is more effective than the 'had a dodgy takeaway' excuse. Plausible, believable and effective.

WINNERS

From the comps in OPS #1

Final Fantasy XII: K McKeller, I Franklin, L Preene, G Lee, J Vaughn, L Yipp, A Bell, G Adamopoulos **Ricky Ponting:** K Dethamos, A Leong, M Gluyas, D Dean, A Francisco, L Collier, M Yung, K Wimm, A Saunters, S Mann **All other winners notified by phone or email.**

PS3 PS2 PSP

PERSIST TO RESIST

Updates... already?

Resistance: Fall of Man has barely been out of its cellophane wrapper, but those lovely boys at Insomniac have already been kind enough to bless us with not one, but two new updates for the PS3's definitive killer app. Man, its almost too... much... gaming... pleasure... to... take. Whoops, we just made a bit of a mess over our desks - better get those fresh wipes out quick smart.

The first update gifts gamers with two all new game modes within the online portion of *Resistance: 'Team Conversion'* and *'Assault' Mode*. Team Conversion is basically a team version of the 'Conversion' game type *Resistance* owners have been enjoying for a while now, and *'Assault'* is your basic 'destroy the enemy base' game.

The update also includes the

addition of a free roaming camera in multiplayer, but a subsequent update of awesomeness is also available for download in May. This update will get rid of all the region based game hosting rules in multiplayer, but more importantly the May updates heralds the appearance of two brand new multiplayer maps. One map, in Westmoreland, is set in a snowy, hilly region of England, while the second, set in Camborn, will feature both "above-ground and subterranean combat". These updates will undoubtedly be impossible to resist (groan...) when they are released in March and May respectively.



PS3 PS2 PSP

TRANSFORMERS...

More than meets the eye...

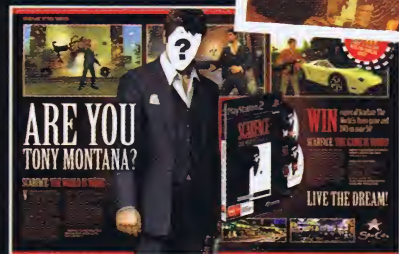
If you are over 20 then you no doubt have some inkling about the classic cartoon *Transformers* and the prodigious power of the almighty Optimus Prime. You will then, no doubt, be completely unsurprised that a live action movie is currently in the works, and a game is being developed as a simultaneous release.

The very first screenshot has now been released for the upcoming game, and from what we can tell, it's looking pretty good. The game is looking to be a solid translation of the *Transformers* experience. The screenshot shows Bumble-Bee in his upright Robot position, and even as the smallest of the *Transformers*, the sheer size of the character is pretty breathtaking. Not much is known about the game so far, but we look forward to finding out more closer to the game's release date this winter.

PS3 PS2 PSP

ROBERT MONTANA

With well over a thousand entries in our *Scarface* promotion it was a tough job finding Australia's Tony Montana but we finally settled on Robert Colombi. The lucky bugger arrived at Star City, Sydney to say hello the money, the power and the women. Two lovely ladies, \$500 worth of gambling chips and \$500 behind the bar was the recipe for the night of a lifetime. Robert wasted no time stepping up to the plate... and the bar... and the roulette table. Thanks for the beers, Rob. If only every night was a night in the life of Tony Montana.



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INFO NUDGE

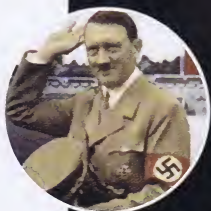
Everything else that's fit to print (and some that's not)



BEAT IT!

Get this: Hip Hop production god, Timbaland, brains behind just about every hit record out right now wants to make you his protégé. Well, actually, he probably doesn't give a crap about you, but he does want your time and money, with new game/music software

Beaterator. Basically a music creation programming with some mixing features, *Beaterator* allows you to make music on your PSP, and play a number of rhythm games along the way. Apparently Timbo himself, the 'brains' behind Justin Timberlake and Missy Elliot to name a few, has made some music for the game, and is excited to get the game out there to potential producers. "I've always been a huge fan of Rockstar and love playing their games," said the 'cuddly' producer, "I'm thrilled to be partnering with them and making music for *Beaterator*. I cannot wait to get this in the hands of our fans!"



A TURNING POINT?

If you're currently enjoying *Resistance: Fall of Man*, then you will probably be interested in this little nugget of info; Atari has recently announced *Turning Point*, another alternate history shooter set in the Second World War. If

you are rolling your eyes and groaning at the prospect of yet another FPS set in this era then we can't blame you, but there are a number of reasons why this game might stand out from the crowd. First off, there are two main single player campaigns, and a good versus evil dynamic that looks set to elevate *Turning Point* from the rabble. Hopefully Codemasters and developers Spark Interactive can take a tired genre and inject some life into it.



GOD OF MORE...

Sheesh... *God of War II* is barely out of the wrapper, but head producer David Jaffe is already running his mouth about the third. Not much was said, but apparently *God of War* is already in development and is scheduled to run

at a retina busting 1080p. Not only that, but in accordance with Sony's new partnership with Immersion, Jaffe let slip that *GOW3* will also use rumble on the SIXAXIS controller! Phew. We can hardly wait, but c'mon chaps, give us time to finish the second one will ya?



P-A-R-T-Y? CAUSE I GOTTA...

Alright chaps, *Habbo* is throwing a party, and guess what? Unlike most cool parties, with the knockout celebs, you're actually invited to this one. The only slight catch is that this party isn't... how can we put it... real? This party takes place online at www.habbo.com.au, a virtual community, where friends can meet up in a virtual hotel and have a virtual good time.

At the moment *Habbo* and Juicy Fruit are busy attempting to break records by throwing the world's biggest virtual beach party. There are some prizes involved, namely \$250 worth of your choice of PlayStation games and a three-month supply of Juicy Fruit, and there is only one request: get to habbo.com.au, create a character based on your fave videogame character, and party down... For a chance to win send us a picture of your character, mark entries 'Habbo Hotel' and follow entry details on page 17.

MUSIC TO OUR EARS

Time to put on your fancy pants, get out your monacle, and polish those shoes, because we're going to the orchestra. But relax, you won't be forced to party down to the sounds of Beethoven, Bach or any of those dull, dead people, this time around we will be chillin' to the orchestral genius of videogame music.

Starting July 19th, the Sydney Symphony Orchestra will be playing through a host of videogame classics, and from the rave reviews this show has been receiving, Play! A Videogame Symphony looks set to be unmissable. Classic tunes from *Metal Gear Solid* to *Final Fantasy* will be played in full, and even more impressively, videogame sequences will be shown during the performances via a set of huge screens that Play! has set up.

Play! A Videogame Symphony is running from the 19th to the 23rd of June, but if sales from previous shows are any indication it will sell out pretty quickly, so if you're interested head to www.sydneypophouse.com/play sooner rather than later.



PS2 GIVEAWAY

HAPPY BIRTHDAY HOT VIRTUAL CHICK

Since Angelina Jolie has gone from 'Tomb Raider' to 'Womb Raider', unashamedly collecting kids like Pokemon cards, it seems like videogames are the only area we are going to see some Lara Croft goodness for the foreseeable future. Well the movies were pretty garbage anyway, so we don't really give a rat's ass.

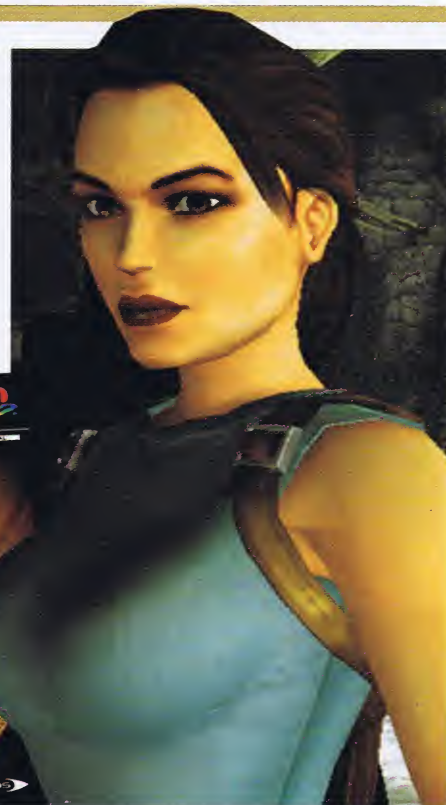
Anyway... courtesy of the good people at Atari we have 10 copies of *Tomb Raider: Anniversary* to give away, helping you indulge in some outstanding Lara Croft jugular action. All one has to do is answer the question below, mark your entry 'Tomb Raider giveaway', and follow the instructions on page 17.

Which actor, currently playing James Bond, starred with Angelina Jolie in *Tomb Raider*?

- A. Daniel Craig
- B. Pierce Brosnan
- C. Roseanne Barr



WIN!





PS3 PS2 PSP

PS-WEE?

Is the PSP set for a redesign?

Rumours have been flying around for a while now that Sony is in the midst of planning a redesigned PSP, but as of recently most of this speculation had remained completely unconfirmed by anyone at Sony – until now. SCE UK managing director Ray Maguire recently told a number of journalists that the current PSP was merely the “first iteration” and that a smaller, more portable PSP would be available in the future.

Nothing was mentioned regarding the actual specs of the new PSP, but there is nothing to suggest that there will be any improvement in the actual hardware. Chances are the new PSP will be exactly the same as the older one, except maybe a few pounds lighter. There are no real concrete dates as to when this new PSP will make its debut, but we suspect it won't be for some time yet.

PSP GIVEAWAY

MARCHING ORDERS

Watching the recent movie *300* is the cinematic equivalent of injecting a pound of raw testosterone directly into your vein, flexing your muscles, and then growing the best beard ever. This movie is about men, doing manly things, and we can't get enough of it (in a strictly heterosexual way).

The game, *300: March to Glory* is based on the same principles, kicking ass and taking names. Thanks to Atari we have five copies of the game to give away, but wait... there's more. We also have five copies of the book *300: The Art of the Movie*, and five double passes to the movie itself. A prize list of this magnitude is manly enough to make Boy George find women attractive. To get your hand on this awesome prize all you need to do is answer this simple question, send the answer to us under the headline ‘300 giveaway’, and follow the entry instructions on page 17.

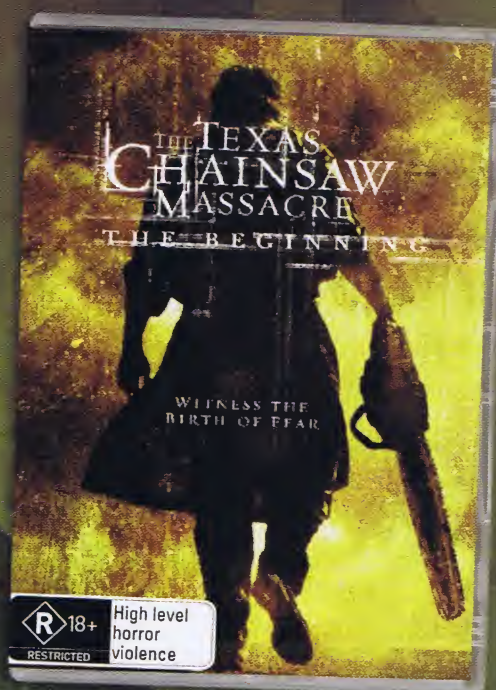
Which other recent Hollywood movie was based on Frank Miller's original Comic Book?

- A. Sisterhood of the Travelling Pants
- B. Sin City
- C. Princess Diaries 2



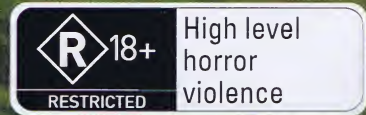
THE TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE

THE BEGINNING



THE ONLY THING
MORE SHOCKING
THAN HOW IT
ENDED IS HOW
IT ALL BEGAN

AVAILABLE NOW
TO RENT OR BUY
ON DVD



LETTERS

LETTER OF THE MONTH

GAME GIRLS



Dear OPS,

I am writing about your lack of content for girls. You must think like all other boys! that girls spend all of their time shopping. Well, I'm afraid to tell you girls don't. We like to play PS2, PS3 and PSP. The only problem is that when we look in your magazine, all we find is a Patchy and Clank review. Pity, isn't it? So instead of showing fifty different racing games why don't you show at least one girls game. Also instead of just having Jessica Green's column you should have more girls reviewing stuff.

Zoe Deed, via email

Zoe, you raise some pretty good points, and in many ways we wish there were more girls like you. We would love to review more games aimed at girls, but the sad fact is that there aren't that many of them, seeing as those idiot game designers seem to think that the female market is non-existent. But things are undoubtedly getting better, developers are getting a better hold on what works for girl gamers, so we hope to see some more decent titles soon. Keep ya head up, girl!



WINNER!



Letter of the month wins a copy of the brilliant Spider-Man 3 thanks to Activision!

JACK'S BACK

I've heard on the Internet that Florida lawyer, Jack Thompson, has filed a suit against Take Two about inappropriate themes in some of their videogames, and the impact they have on the community, especially children. I don't understand. Sure, many of the games Take Two publish have quite strong themes but that's why they are rated M, MA, etc.

Why is he complaining about videogames when two shelves over there are countless videos and TV shows that depict scenes containing more violent or socially unacceptable themes compared to any GTA game. It just annoys me, and most likely 100% of the gaming community, that he is attacking videogames for their content



when other forms of media are much worse. Why doesn't he walk down the street? Isn't Florida the drug capital of America?

Callum Murdoch, via email

Believe us Callum, we are well aware of this Jack Thompson idiot, and his insane quest

to rid the world of awesome games. But don't worry, we've heard some rumours that Take Two has refused to take Thompson's legal mumbo jumbo lying down, and has actually filed a counter suit against him. This suit will hopefully prevent Jack Thompson from pulling any crap in the future, and could possibly lead to him being disbarred, meaning he might soon be out of a job and won't be able to practise law again - Hurray!



NEVER ENDING STORY

While reading your mag, and most importantly your game reviews (I value your opinion, never have you steered me toward a rubbish game/coaster), a thought occurred. Due to the sheer processing power of the PS3 and the amount of info on the Blu-ray Discs, will

the game makers have games that last three to four times as long?

Don't you think players will be turned off by the amount of time it takes to finish a game, no matter how good it is? If they can play for days/weeks on the same game, won't this affect the sales of the other games available?

Rob Andrew, via email

Yeah, we guess it might be possible to create huge games that seem to last forever (see our preview of Oblivion for proof) but we think that the huge amount of space that Blu-ray allows will result in more detail in games as opposed to longer games. Environments will be more interactive, AI will be deeper and everything will generally look a whole lot better. Games will move forward, but we believe the average length of games will, in general, remain the same.

FREAK OF THE MONTH

THREE YOUR MIND

Hello to all those at the newly established Official PlayStation Magazine! Soon gamers all across the country will be getting their hands on the new generation of gaming. To commemorate this momentous occasion I have written an anthem for us PS3 owners to march to:

THE ARMY OF THREE

There were days when we marched as the army of two
We were the gods of war, the warriors dressed in black
We felt the buzz, the world was ours, and we had just cause
To takedown, to get revenge.
But that was just our dawn of dreams, our final fantasy
Now the saints have lined up and thrown down their heavenly swords
Make way for the Army of Three.

Now the battlelines have been drawn
Now this is our night to fight
We are the blazing angels, the ultimate alliance
Forward march, the Army of Three!
Carl Gregory, via email

You know Carl, we actually feel bad for labelling you 'Freak of the Month' because this anthem is actually kind of awesome. You have an insane level of 'punnage potential' and we were pretty impressed. We just can't believe that you wrote the thing in the first place. We recommend that you put your song writing 'skillz' to better use. A PS3 anthem is pretty cool place to start, but how about starting a band, or writing a gorgeous chick a ballad and reaping the benefits. The possibilities are endless - possibly awesome! This gift could take you places kid, don't be afraid to use it!

ANGER MANAGEMENT

I have worked for a long time to save up the money for my PS3, and now I've got the money. I know everything about the PS3, how it will work with my TV, where to put it so it can have good ventilation, the specs, what firmware it's up to, how the backward compatibility works etc. I've never been more hyped in my life.

So this is where I got mad...

My friend called me and said, "I'm getting a PS3, my parents are buying me one". I was so pissed as he is not a Sony fan at all. Today he asked me "Does the PS3 have an HDMI port?" I was like "WTF is he getting the greatest gaming machine in history and he knows nothing about it?" But seeing as he knows nothing about which games to get I'll tell him about all the crap games, then his parents will buy them! That will teach him...

James Vassiliou, via email

Hey James, we feel your pain. Everyone has that one friend who never had to work for anything in their life and it's easy to get jealous of their good luck. You know, that one especially annoying mate who had every console bought for him

BACKWARDS MAN

I love the new design of the mag. It's sleek, glossy and looks very next gen, as a next gen mag should! But I have a slight problem. When reading the paper the other day I was shocked to come across an issue that should concern every faithful PS2 owner. The newspaper mentioned that Sony Europe has stripped the PAL PS3s of their backwards compatibility, rendering them unable to play PS2 and PSone games.

This disappointed me greatly. I was hoping to trade in my old console when I bought the new one, but now I will have to keep it because of the many games that I'm not ready to part with yet. My question is why? What do they have to gain? The thought of the PS3 not being backwards compatible makes it much less appealing. Don't get me wrong, it's not going to stop me from getting one, it's just very



■ Our art guy, five minutes before deadline. The clock is ticking Phill...

on the day of release, but most of them ended up gathering dust, because he didn't like games? But if you think about it James, you've actually got it pretty good. When you work hard for something you really want, you appreciate it all the more. The

day you get that brand spanking new PS3 you will know you earned it. This buddy of yours might never get as much enjoyment out of his consoles as you will, so you've got nothing to worry about.



disappointing.

Scott Mac, via email

Well Scott, we have some good news for you. The PS3 is backwards compatible, it's just that the compatibility works in a slightly different way. Whereas the NTSC PS3 has the actual PS2 hardware inside, the PAL PS3s 'emulate' the PS2 hardware through software. This is just a technical way of saying that there's very little difference between the backwards compatibility of

either PS3. The number of PS2 games that are playable on a PAL PS3 is admittedly less, but most of your favourite PS2 games will work perfectly. Regular firmware updates ought to take care of the rest before too long. At any rate, the PS3's awesome launch games should keep you more than occupied!

CUTTINGS

Delicious bite-sized letter morsels that are easy to swallow

CLOSE BUT NO CIGAR

While I've got your attention can I please have a Full HD 1080p Sony Bravia please?

Amos Brookes, via email

We were all ready to post you a brand new 70 inch 1080p HD Bravia Amos, but you didn't leave your address! Unlucky mate, we're just going to have to commandeer it for our extensive Resistance and MotorStorm usage. Sorry!

SIZE MATTERS

Do you think that 20gb PS3s will ever become available in our wonderful Australian region, or will I have to save up even more for extras, that in my opinion, I don't even need?

Dan Moore, via email

To be perfectly honest Dan, we just don't know. There is a possibility that Sony might release the 20 gig version sometime down the track, but there's no guarantee. But if you think you won't need the extra space, just wait until you see what's available in the PlayStation Store, you might be glad you have 60 gig to spare.

A NEW HOPE

Is there going to be a *Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas Stories* game on PSP, and if so is it going to be released anytime soon?

Nathan Perry, via email

It's possible, maybe even likely, that a San Andreas game might somehow make its way to the PSP. As of now we have no information, but we believe that a game set in the San Andreas universe is entirely possible.

INSIDE GAMING

THIS MONTH MARK DUKES IT OUT WITH KRATOS

Mark: So Kratos, first question – just how hard are you?

Kratos: Well let me put it this way, Jack Bauer is in the kitchen making me a ham sandwich, Chuck Norris is loading up my dishwasher, and Mr T is sorting my DVDs into 'alphabetical' order as we speak. That's how hard I am.

Mark: That's pretty awesome.

Kratos: Yeah, I'm pretty much the manliest man ever born. There's really no limit to my manliness. I can open any jar, no matter how tight, and I can sharpen a pencil with a Stanley Knife. Pencil sharpeners are for pussies.

Mark: Amen Kratos, amen.

Kratos: I AM THE GOD OF WAR!!! (Blue sparks of magic fly everywhere)

Mark: Whoa... easy, tiger, I just bought a new carpet Kratos. I don't want it singed with your tomfoolery. Behave yourself old chap.

Kratos: Ah... sorry about that, just thought I'd make sure you guys all knew who I was: I am the God of War.

Mark: Actually I've been meaning to talk to you about that...

Kratos: What do you mean?

Mark: Well, I've been doing some research and my name 'Mark' is actually derived from the Roman God of War, Mars... so actually I feel like I have a legitimate claim to become the new God of War.

Kratos: Really... how interesting... (unsheathes huge, scary sword)

Mark: (panicked) Or not, maybe I can just be an assistant God of War or a Junior God, I'm totally flexible on the issue!

Kratos: Well I do have an opening for God's little bitch-boy coffee maker if you are interested?

SPEAK TO US

Love the new mag? Hate the new mag? We want your opinions and questions on OPS, on games – on *anything* that you feel the need to share with your fellow readers. The best letter of each issue wins the Game of the Month! Write to us on paper or on a computer at:

OPS Feedback
Derwent Howard
PO Box 1037
Bondi Junction, NSW 1355
ops@derwenthoward.com.au

PS3 PS2 PSP PREVIEW

■ **GENRE:** RACING
■ **PLAYERS:** 1-10
■ **RELEASE:** AUGUST 2007
■ **DISTRIBUTOR:** THQ
■ **DEVELOPER:** JUICE GAMES
■ **WEB:** www.juiced2hin.com

JUICED 2: HOT IMPORT NIGHTS

Feeling hot, hot, hot...

There is more detail in one wheel of a car in *Juiced 2* than there was in an entire car in the original *Juiced*.

Fact.

Or at least, that's what we were told. We found it a little hard to concentrate on just how meticulously modelled the wheels were when they were blistering across the screen at 160km/h. Sideways.

But it is a damn good looking game. No doubt about it.

HIGH BEAM

Juiced 2: Hot Import

Nights reflects a new arrangement between THQ and US car show *Hot Import Nights* (a touring event that attracts pimptacular street rods and the kind of ample ladies who'll gladly lather themselves in margarine and slither around your underpants if you tell them that Skyline is yours). Why the merger? Well, illegal street racing, as a genre, is stale. There's no

denying that. There's only so much bad-boy-with-a-heart-of-gold-on-the-run-from-Johnny-Law we can take. So, to its credit, *Juiced 2* takes a somewhat different tack. By forging a relationship with *Hot Import Nights* the racing experience is legitimised. Instead of making you hide, *Juiced 2* wants to make you





■ "Yep, that's right, I just scratched 'half inch penis' on your car door"



■ Replacing balls with cars on roulette wheels: the latest craze in Vegas.



part of something. Not only does this set it apart from its competitors, it sets it apart from its prequel. In *Juiced* you were a common hoodlum. In *Juiced 2* you're a professional racer.

Another element worth noting is the fact that, like *Midnight Club*, *Juiced 2* bucks the trend of using mostly generic, fantasy locations in favour of real-world locations.

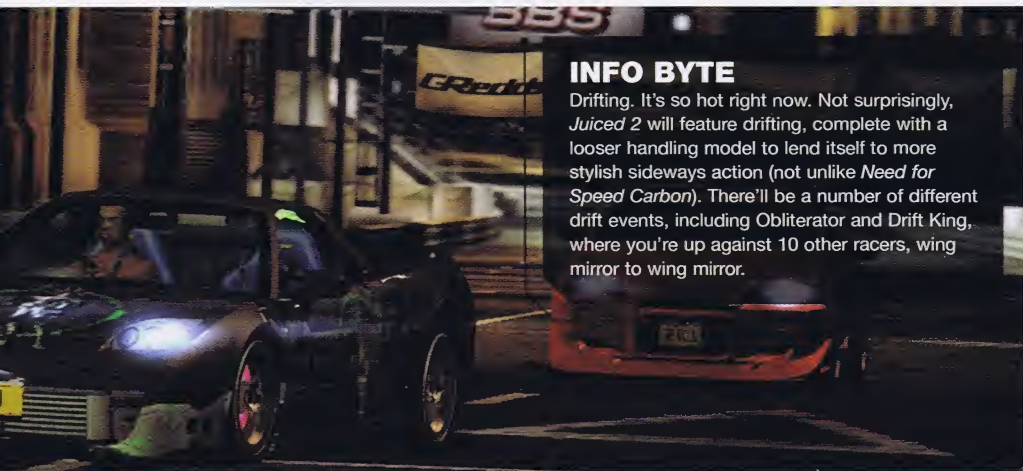
Unlike the former however, *Juiced 2* uses custom, purpose-built tracks as opposed to setting you loose in global CBDs. It's not all bad news though, because *Juiced*

2 is about the spectacle. You can expect some super-wild circuits you'd never see in real life. As the developers noted, real racing organisations are restricted by budget, time and geography. It would be prohibitively expensive and immensely difficult to build a temporary racetrack near Circular Quay that poked out over Sydney Harbour. If you were to set up a circuit in Rome where the start/finish line was in the Coliseum we're pretty sure archaeologists worldwide would be bleeding out of their ears. We're also fairly certain the French would dislike a gaggle of turbocharged rice

GENE THERAPY

Juiced 2's Driver DNA is actually quite intriguing. Every time you drive, your performance is constantly monitored and recorded. Every driver, including you, will have their own Driver DNA, which will be visible to all other players. By checking Driver DNA you'll be able to uncover exactly what you're up against. The Driver DNA is presented on-screen as a double helix with specific traits listed along the edge. The spectrum ranges from blue to red, blue being a precise iceman who'll surgically dissect you on track and red an impatient hothead who'll drive straight through you. Both extremes are as dangerous as each other.





INFO BYTE

Drifting. It's so hot right now. Not surprisingly, *Juiced 2* will feature drifting, complete with a looser handling model to lend itself to more stylish sideways action (not unlike *Need for Speed Carbon*). There'll be a number of different drift events, including Obliterator and Drift King, where you're up against 10 other racers, wing mirror to wing mirror.



rockets screaming under the Eiffel Tower. However, games have no such limitations and, as such, *Juiced 2* will feature a wide array of hyper-real circuits in eight iconic international cities.

Juice Games didn't elaborate too much on the career mode, although we expect it'll be the same old fairytale. Beat everyone, win cash, be a hero (or a heroine, if your created racer is of the female persuasion). What we were told, however, is that *Juiced 2* will be heavily online focused and that the online career mode will mimic the offline career mode, with human opponents replacing CPU racers. Like the original you'll be able to bet on races, a nice touch that makes winning all the more important and losing all the more painful. Betting has been expanded online and won't just be limited to the players involved in the race – spectators will be able to get in on the action. In other words, if you need some dosh to bring your ailing ride up to speed but don't feel like taking it out on the track, you can make a quick buck having a flutter on the outcome of a few online stoushes. Naturally, pink slip racing also makes a return – something that can turn an ordinary race into a fight to keep the very car you spent thousands modifying and hours perfecting.

TOP GEAR

When we asked the developers of *Need for Speed Carbon* if we could expect any Australian cars to make an appearance we were told we would need to wait until the final car list was revealed. We waited. There weren't any.

And before you mention it, a Vauxhall Monaro doesn't count.

Unfortunately this is symptomatic of US developers. Aside from their own backyard, they don't tend to look further

than Japan or Europe for vehicles. US cars, naturally, are a shoe-in. If it was made in Michigan, you can strap an elk to the hood or are able to run over large groups of hippies in one, it's in. Japanese marques are in because they do 1000 miles to the gallon, never break down and tuners are constantly wrenching impossible amounts of power out of seemingly pissy little four-cylinder engines. Europe gets a look-in because, well, that's where Ferraris and stuff come from, right? But down under? We usually get screwed out.

However, Juice Games is based in Manchester, which, for the geographically challenged, makes the staff English. Despite years of beating them at cricket, working behind their bars and getting freaky with their pasty daughters, Juice Games has still decided to throw us Australians a bone. When we asked Juice Games if we could expect any Aussie cars in *Juiced 2* we weren't told to wait and see. In fact, we were given a rather straightforward answer.

Yes.

More specifically, like its predecessor we can expect both the Monaro and Falcon to lend their aggressively sculpted bodies and suitably ocker tones to *Juiced 2*. This is no small matter. Car fans, like sports fans, are fiercely loyal and tribalistic. Releasing a racing game in Australia without Australian cars is like releasing a rugby game without the Wallabies. Thankfully, someone at Juice Games has their finger on the pulse.

Beyond our V8s however, it's all still a tad vague. We've been told you can expect upwards of 90 different cars from the usual range of ubiquitous Japanese rice rockets to classic muscle cars to European purebreds.

It will be possible to modify all these vehicles to your virtual heart's content with

a catalogue full of after-market delights from 300 licensed manufacturers. The performance modding is broken down into power, weight and handling upgrades, and although there's little new here, an X-ray view of your car allows you to see the changes as you apply them to the parts – which is rather nifty. We won't bore you with a huge list of cosmetic tweakables, but in addition to everything you'd expect (spoilers, bumpers and so on) there's a glut of truly inane but undeniably cool options like the ability to put scissor doors on your Supra. Or stretch, scale and rotate up to 50 layers of vinyl and decals (from a pool of more than 2000) on any one of the car's panels you choose.

Or install New South Wales numberplates on your Monaro.

We didn't make that up either. As we mentioned before, *Juiced 2* will boast a hefty online component and Juice Games is serious about letting you build a truly individual online identity. You'll be able to wear that numberplate like a badge of honour, displaying to all that you come from a land down under (where beer does flow and men chunder). Coupled with deep avatar customisation and the aforementioned car tinkering you'll be a beautiful and unique snowflake in a... sea of... other snowflakes.

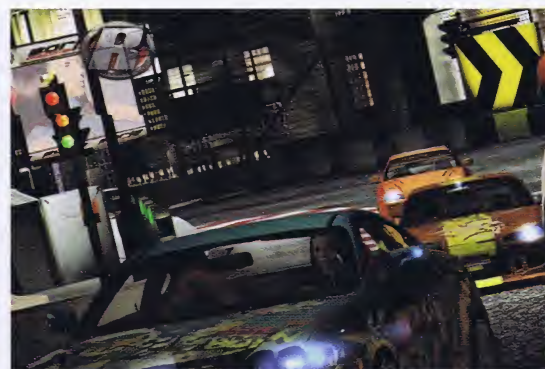
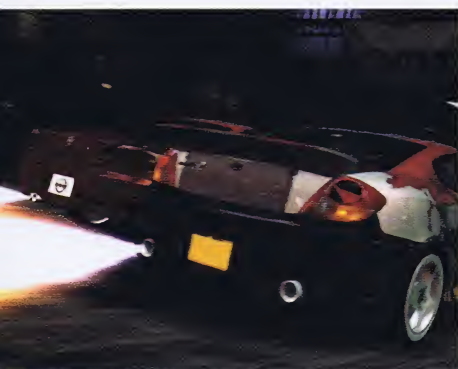
We'll squeeze out more info as we get it. **— Luke Reilly**

WHAT THEY SAY:

■ "*Juiced 2: Hot Import Nights* evolves the current street racing scene, letting players experience the culture of the real-life *HIN* tour, in an intense racing experience."

WHAT WE SAY:

■ Could make *Need for Speed* bleed.



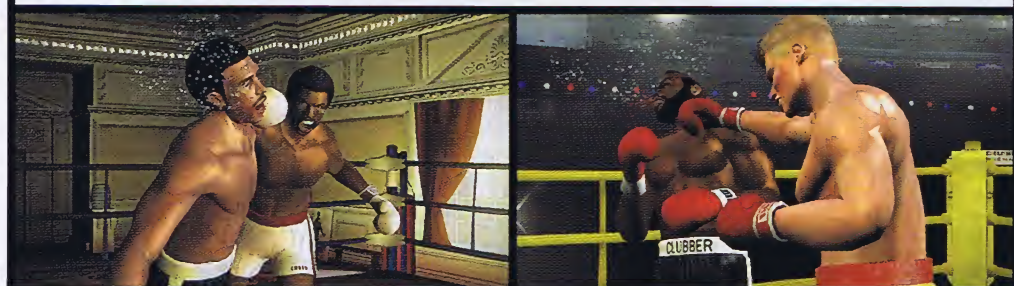
★ LIVE THE LEGEND ★

HE WAS A TOUGH GUY
FROM A TOUGHER NEIGHBORHOOD.
BUT ROCKY BALBOA DIDN'T
LET THAT STOP HIM.

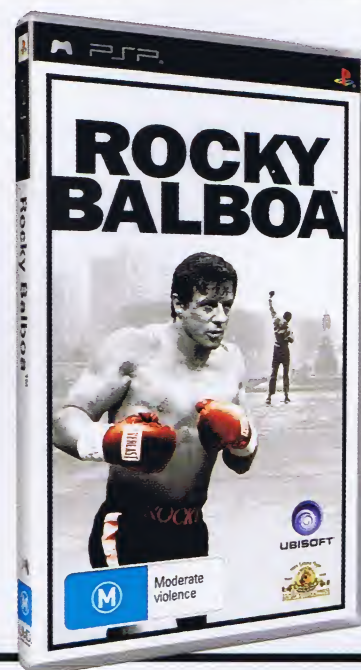
NOW IT'S YOUR TURN
TO EXPERIENCE THE BLOOD AND GLORY
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PUT ON THE GLOVES OF ANY FIGHTER FROM THE ENTIRE ROCKY SERIES



Moderate
violence



PlayStation®Portable



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PS3 PS2 PSP PREVIEW

■ **GENRE:** FIRST-PERSON SHOOTER
■ **PLAYERS:** 1-32 (ONLINE)
■ **RELEASE:** LATE 2007
■ **DISTRIBUTOR:** THQ
■ **DEVELOPER:** THQ STUDIO AUS
■ **WEB:** www.frontlinesgame.com



FRONTLINES: FUEL OF WAR

"Gimme fuel, gimme fire, gimme that which I desire..."

2024. Just around the corner. Dwindling world resources have triggered a mad scramble to nab as much of what remains as possible. Old wounds are reopened and the world is plunged into another Cold War.

Only this time, things are about to boil over – big time.

KILLING COMMIES AGAIN? NOT VERY PC, IS IT?

No. Not really. But it is a videogame. A peaceful utopia where our cars are powered by our own sense of self-satisfaction may be the future we're banking on, but peace does not a great videogame make. To tap into that inner warrior you need bullets, blood and bodybags, and you need to keep them coming until you're the only bastard left alive. *Frontlines: Fuel of War* has all of this, and a whole lot more.

As you'd expect, old enemies are new enemies and a global war for oil is being waged between two newly emerging superpowers: the Red Star Alliance (Russia and China) and the Western Coalition (the United States and the European Union). With the power of combined weapons and research budgets all bets are off and the battleground has never been more deadly.

We managed to get our hands on both the single-player and the multiplayer at THQ's recent Gamer's Day and can happily report that *Frontlines* is progressing nicely.

The first single-player mission of *Frontlines* is a real treat. It kicks off in a commendably cinematic fashion with

you, a few teammates and an embedded journalist hunkered down in a chopper en route to an enemy oil refinery. As the grunts exchange banter in the cabin, hard rock blares away in the background – angrying up the blood and making that trigger finger all the itchier. Upon arrival the chopper is suddenly fired on. One soldier is shredded by machine-gun fire through the open door and there's panic inside. The journalist is freaking out. The soldiers are freaking out. The pilot is freaking out. All the while an RPG is streaking towards the jinking chopper, a spiralling white trail behind betraying its presence. The pilot banks too late and the chopper is crippled, spinning towards the ground. Inside, the crew and passengers are pinned by the lateral G-forces and brace for impact as best they can. The stricken heli ploughs into the ground and the next thing you see is your embedded reporter shaking you awake. He leaves, and suddenly you and a handful of survivors are left to fend off a concerted attack on the crash zone, evade capture and escape the refinery. Welcome to the frontline.

Frontlines adheres to most first-person shooter conventions and, as such, we were able to come to grips with it quickly. The controls aren't lacking and the action is satisfyingly intense. What's new, however, is the way it incorporates elements usually reserved for online PC shooters into its single-player campaign.



■ "Pizza for Johnson? Arghhh stop shooting at me!"



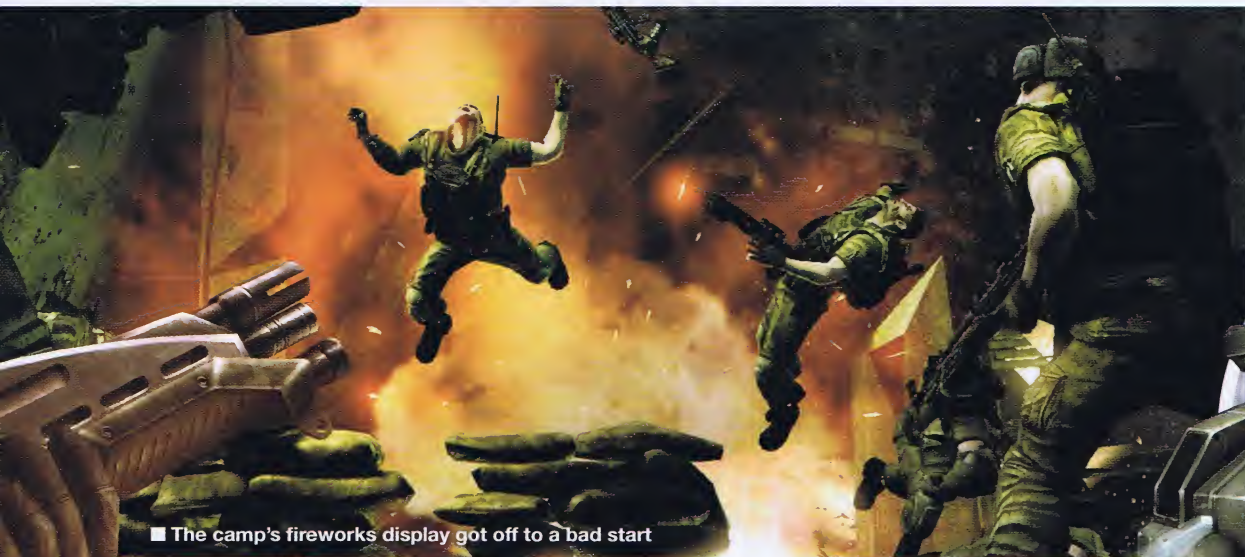


■ "Wooh! This is the fastest hummer I've ever had!"
"Sorry Sarge, I must be losing my touch"



BIG BOYS TOYS

The recon drone was far and away the coolest weapon we got to use during our time with *Frontlines*. A remote-controlled device, the recon drone allows you to fly over and survey the battlefield. Enemies spotted by your recon drone will appear on your own radar (and, in multiplayer, on all your comrades' radar), which makes flushing out entrenched opponents and avoiding potential ambushes a cinch. Because you control the drone yourself you can even fly the device up to an unsuspecting squad of foes and detonate it.



■ The camp's fireworks display got off to a bad start



INFO BYTE

Frontlines will feature around 60 futuristic weapons and vehicles based upon the most cutting-edge weaponry of the present day. Expect to see everything from an updated M1A2 Abrams tank to next gen assault rifles.

Like *Call of Duty 3* there'll be a variety of classes to select from (assault, anti-armour, sniper, etc.) and your class will determine your choice of loadouts and, to a large extent, your capacity on the battlefield (a hidden sniper some way from the frontline will prove a deadly hazard, but exposed and outnumbered they're as useless as tits on a bull). However, in addition to each class, players will also be able to choose from one of four different positions: ground support, air support, counter measures and drone technician. These can be levelled up three times based on your use of each one's exclusive abilities. For instance, the Western Coalition air support role begins

with the ability to call in a conventional air strike from an airborne drone. Level 2 sees it upgraded to a cluster bomb strike, which spreads the destruction over a much wider area, and Level 3 grants you access to a Vulcan cannon (mounted in a gunship above the battlefield) to deliver 6,000 rounds per minute into your hapless enemies. The Red Star Alliance air support role begins the much the same, but Level 2 sees use of a devastating bunker-buster that will decimate anything and Level 3 upgrades to a staggering air-fuel strike that blankets the area in an inferno (like the air-fuel grenades in *Resistance*, only way bigger. And hotter. You could BBQ a brontosaurus burger quicker than you could fetch the oversized bun you're

planning on putting it on).

Quake Wars or *Frontlines*? The battle lines are drawn, and we can't wait to decide on a winner. ➤ **Luke Reilly**

WHAT THEY SAY:

■ "*Frontlines: Fuel of War* will take players to the next generation of combat. The game focuses on the cutting edge in military technology that will allow players to experience the highly-charged frontlines of tomorrow, today"

WHAT WE SAY:

■ Can we play it again tomorrow?

During each mission you'll be able to see a colour coded virtual frontline on your minimap that shows you at a glance how far you've pushed the enemy back, or how far you're being forced back yourself. At any one time a number of objectives will be spread across and around the frontline that will require your attention should you wish to push further into enemy territory.

The similarities to popular online shooters don't end there either. If and when you do cark it mid-mission you won't be returned to a checkpoint earlier in the level. Instead, the battle will continue on without you and you'll be shown a respawn window. From it you can choose a new weapon loadout and select where you'd like to respawn from, based on what waypoints you've captured in the course of your objectives so far.

FORGET SINGLE-PLAYER, I HAVE FRIENDS YOU KNOW!

In that case you'll be well catered for. Both the multiplayer and the single player gameplay actually have a lot in common. Aside from the glaring difference of replacing NPCs with human players there's not a lot to separate the two modes.

One of the better elements of *Frontlines*' multiplayer is the distinction between player classes.



■ "Hey Kowalski? Why are you so short?" "I'm in crouch mode, you idiot" "Oh... sorry"

PS3 PS2 PSP
PREVIEW

■ **GENRE:** RPG
■ **PLAYERS:** 1
■ **RELEASE:** APRIL 2007
■ **DISTRIBUTOR:** UBISOFT
■ **DEVELOPER:** BETHESDA
■ **WEB:** www.bethsoft.com



THE ELDER SCROLLS IV: OBLIVION

A Knight to remember...



Ah, posh English accents, don't you just love them? It seems like all English actors, (besides Hugh Grant who sucks balls anyway) are destined to either a) play a sophisticated, mastermind villain in random action movies, or b) star in 'epic' period pieces for the rest of their pathetic lives. Poor bastards. For some strange reason Hollywood likes to believe that absolutely everyone born before the 19th century spoke like Prince Charles. The Romans, the Greeks, the Spartans, even fictional races on far off imaginary medieval societies, every single one of these idiots apparently speaks with a gut wrenchingly whiny English accent. One time, just one

time we would love to hear a Knight talk with a 'rawkin' American accent, or even speak jive. Awesome. We can but hope...

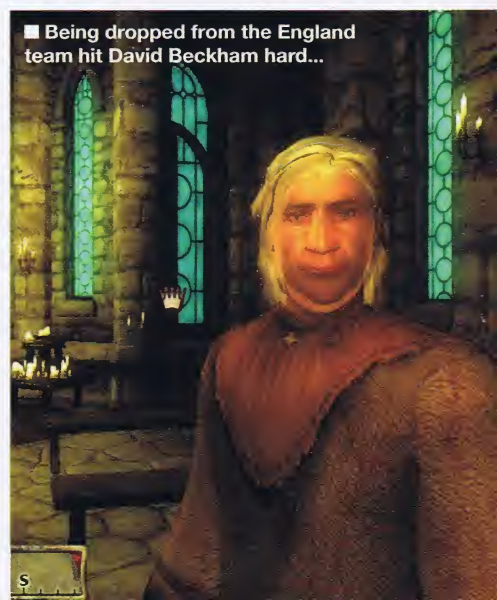
Sadly it seems that videogames are continuing this worrying trend of outright Englishness, but when that game is as jaw-droppingly 'spiffing' as *The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion*, it's hard to make any complaints. If you can handle the barrage of a concentrated dose of 'posh', you might just uncover one of the most engrossing RPGs of the last 10 years.

Oblivion is the fourth game in the open-ended *Elder Scrolls* series, a franchise that has been pushing the RPG genre in new directions for over 12 years now. Traditionally the domain of PC games, the

series took the console plunge with *The Elder Scrolls III: Morrowind* and has never looked back. Set in the fictional land of Tamriel, it is your sworn duty to help close the gates of Oblivion and bring harmony back to the land after the death of the previous Emperor. You must restore his illegitimate son Martin to the throne, and kick seven different kinds of holy crap out of anyone who stands in your way.

While the storyline is no doubt important, the best thing about *Oblivion* is that you could quite easily spend 50 hours messing around and not even touch the main quest. *Oblivion* features a huge, sprawling game map in which you could quite easily spend hours picking up the

■ Being dropped from the England team hit David Beckham hard...





THE UPPER CRUST

Posh accent? Check. A facial expression like you've just smelt dog turd? Check. Ability to sound 'villainous'? Check. You are now able to star in an 'epic' period movie about some historical war. Here are some of the actors who have bravely gone before you.

JEREMY IRONS

Has done the Euro-villain thing in *Die Hard With A Vengeance* and featured in every movie about medieval royalty ever made. This man is the best of the best. Has some really bad teeth though. Terrifying.

JUDI DENCH

A master of the 'I've just smelt dog turd' facial expression, Dench is a period piece stalwart, winning numerous Oscar nominations for simply looking 'mean'. Has the world record for 'longest grimace' and 'thinnest lips'.

SEAN BEAN

The supervillain of the 'epic' genre; guaranteed to turn on you at any moment, or die at some point in the movie. Ironically, Bean actually does some voice acting in *Oblivion*. Our advice? Don't trust the bastard, he probably won't last long anyway.

at some point, regardless.

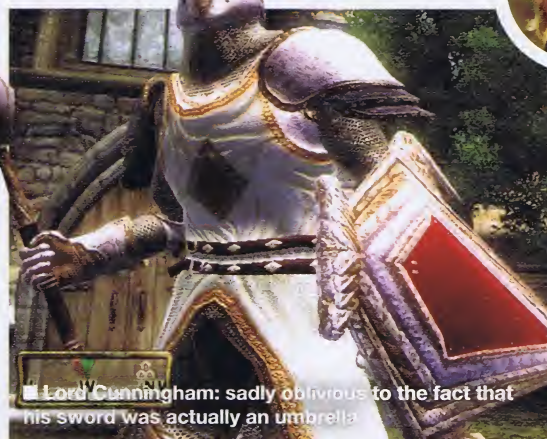
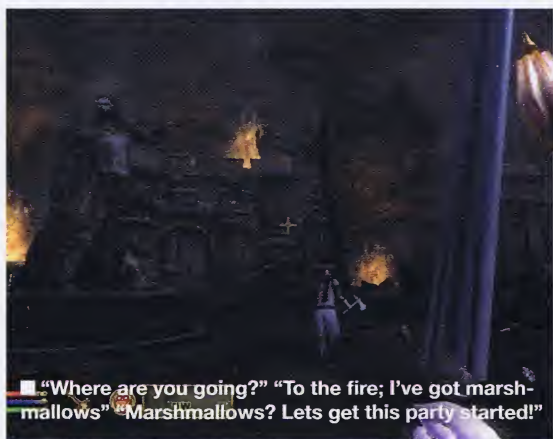
Although it is, admittedly, a relatively old game, the question remains: is *Oblivion* still a compelling purchase? When you factor in the updated visuals and the new, additional content we think the answer to that question is a resounding yes. There is no game that will give you more bang for your buck than *Oblivion*, and at the end of the day it really is an awesome, must-play title. The fact that PS3 owners have been given the chance to play an enhanced version of an already existing classic is a blessing, and one that we reckon you should take advantage of when it's released. **Mark Serrels**

WHAT THEY SAY:

"*Oblivion* features a powerful combination of free-form gameplay, and unprecedented graphics..."

WHAT WE SAY:

In terms of scope and depth, no other RPG comes close to the sheer scale of *Oblivion*.



huge number of side-quests available, or even simply go the tourist route, wandering around admiring the scenery.

And trust us, the scenery is pretty easy to admire. When *Oblivion* first arrived last year, it was a nice-looking game, but the power of the PS3 has enabled Bethesda to add a little bit of pizzazz, pushing the eye candy factor through the roof. Draw distance has been increased significantly, allowing for some spectacular panoramic views, and the pop-up that plagued other versions has been significantly reduced.

What really amazed us, however, was the sheer scope of the game. To keep the high level of graphical consistency

over such a huge environment is a stellar achievement. The lighting effects are stunning, and the transitions between the different types of terrain are consistent and realistic. It is not an exaggeration to say that after two straight hours of *Oblivion* in a dark room on an HDTV, the level of immersion is such that you might possibly forget you are even playing a videogame.

Despite the fact that just the basic package will probably take up say... about 100+ hours of your life if you let it, *Oblivion* also comes with some extra missions and side quests in addition to all the original content. The Knights of the Nine quest is perhaps the most prominent of these

additions, a huge side quest that has you retrieving artefacts in order to re-establish the Knights' previously stellar reputation.

It would have been nice, however, to see the soon-to-be-released *Shivering Isles* expansion pack added to the package. *Oblivion* is, after all, over a year old now, and the incentive of something more current would have made for an even better package. Considering the huge scale of the game, however, and the fact that there is almost 200 hours of solid play, it's hard to argue that *Oblivion* isn't good value for money. It's also a pretty solid guarantee that this additional content will be made available on the PlayStation Store

INFO BYTE

The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion features one of the best 'create a character' modes on the market. The room for character customisation is pretty much endless.

"It is not an exaggeration to say that after two straight hours of *Oblivion* in a dark room on an HDTV, the level of immersion is such that you might possibly forget you are even playing a videogame."

PS3 PS2 PSP PREVIEW

■ **GENRE:** MECH ACTION
■ **PLAYERS:** 1-8
■ **RELEASE:** APRIL 2007
■ **DISTRIBUTOR:** RED ANT
■ **DEVELOPER:** FROM SOFTWARE
■ **WEB:** www.sega.com



■ "Hey man, you wanna see me light my own fart?" "For the love of God no, you run on avgas you idiot!" (match striking sound) "Shiiiiiiiiiiii....."

ARMORED CORE 4

The cult classic goes online, thanks to the PS3

We've always been big fans of the *Armored Core* series; it continually manages to offer something different compared with other mech games. Despite being relatively slow and tactical, it come across as an action game and there's so much depth to AC's mech modification system that it almost feels like we've gotten our hands dirty tinkering under the hood every time From Software releases a new model.

The major update from previous *Armored Core* games is the PS3 version's expansion into the wide-open world of online gaming. You can now take your fully customised Core online to battle against up to seven other Core owners simultaneously. We've playtested this feature a lot but we're still getting our ass

kicked by hardcore Japanese *Armored Core* fans. It seems like they're the only ones playing it online right now, so be prepared for a very tough test when the Aussie version lands next month.

We're happy to report that, true to *Armored Core*'s roots, customisation and modification still play a huge role in this sequel. In fact, the attention to detail in *Armored Core 4* is almost intimidating: if you choose to improve one part of your Core, for example, it could be to the detriment of the mech's other features. You have to balance strengths in each department, and it takes a lot of head scratching to come up with a finely tuned Core. If you decide to skip this feature, diving straight into battle, other mechs will spot your vulnerabilities from miles away.

Preparation is crucial.

Another cool online feature in *Armored Core 4* is the ability to trade parts, and even whole mechs, with other AC4 players. This means that the retrieval of new items and rewards is no longer exclusive to the game's single-player campaign – it's also possible to go online like a dodgy geezer, selling and buying upgrades with AC4 currency.

And speaking of the single-player mode, this area has also been revamped. The action is now quicker than before, with most solo missions lasting only a few minutes. There are, however, plenty of missions to work through – so there's no need to worry about longevity. *Armored Core 4* looks the part too, as you can see from the screens on this page, and

although the series is renowned for its deeply tactical gameplay as opposed to flashy graphics, AC4 seems able to juggle both aspects. There aren't any other mech games that look or play quite like this one. Frankly, we're dying to play the final Aussie version. **Jonti Davies**

WHAT THEY SAY:

■ "This dazzling brand new chapter offers the ultimate in fast-paced, high octane mech simulation."

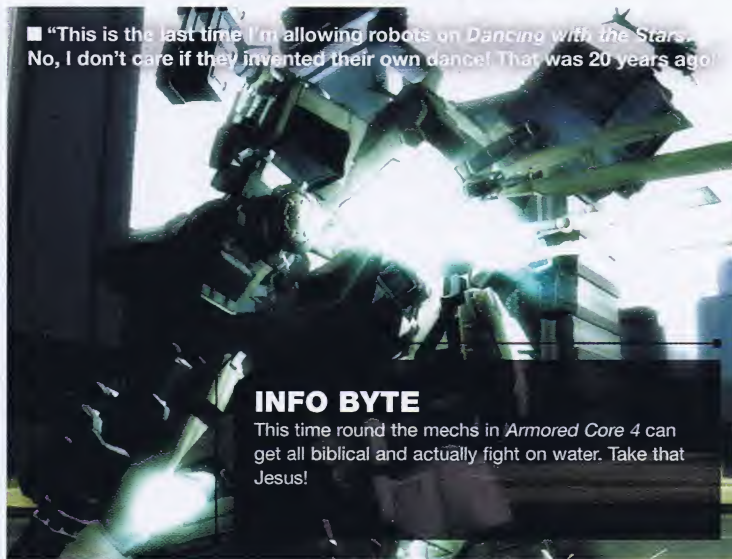
WHAT WE SAY:

■ Just how much octane do these badboys need? Surely it's about time From Software developed hybrid or electric mechs for the sake of the environment.

■ "Base do you copy? Optimus here... yeah, I forgot my sandals... YES again! Hurry my feet are chafing!"



■ "This is the last time I'm allowing robots on *Dancing with the Stars*. No, I don't care if they invented their own dance! That was 20 years ago!"



INFO BYTE

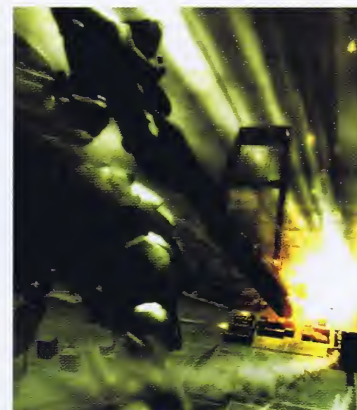
This time round the mechs in *Armored Core 4* can get all biblical and actually fight on water. Take that Jesus!

MULTI-PLANNED

In many ways, this is the most accessible *Armored Core* game to date, but fans shouldn't worry – it's not as if we've got an *Armored Core Lite* on our hands. From Software has actually made a wise concession – automatic lock-on. As long as your Core is facing at least vaguely in the direction of enemy craft, *Armored Core 4* will do some of the hard work for you. Online, particularly, this can be a life-saver.



■ "So what. You can jump high. Am I supposed to be impressed?" "Um yeah, actually, I weigh 300 tonnes"





OR

\$1000

OR



play rock paper scissors

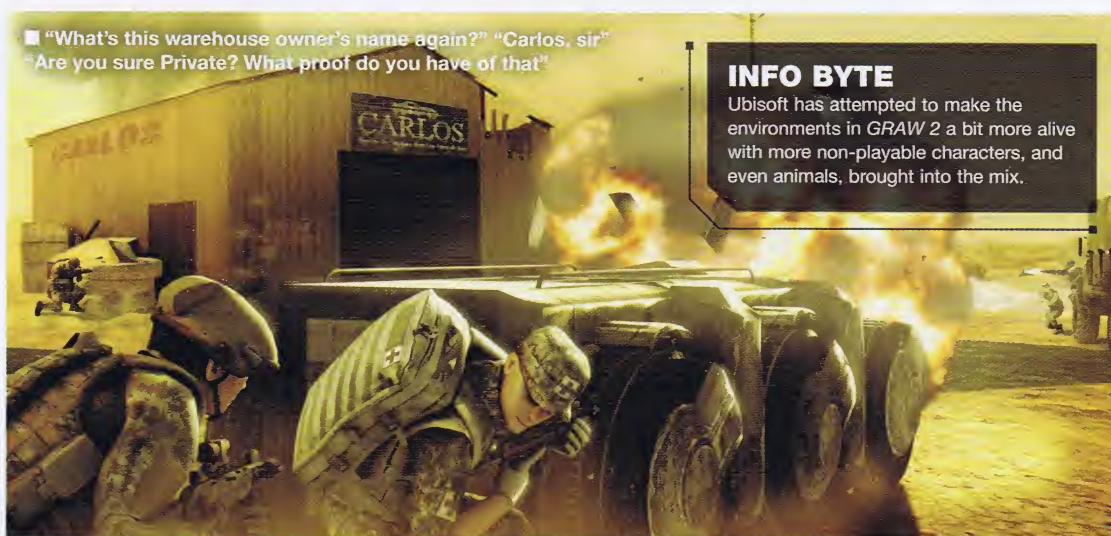
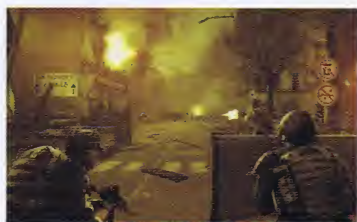
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PS3 PS2 PSP PREVIEW

■ **GENRE:** TACTICAL SHOOTER
■ **PLAYERS:** 1-16
■ **RELEASE:** APRIL 2007
■ **DISTRIBUTOR:** UBISOFT
■ **DEVELOPER:** UBISOFT
■ **WEB:** www.ubi.com



GHOST RECON ADVANCED WARFIGHTER 2

War is hell. Or is it?

War is hell apparently; lots of blood, death, pain and destruction seems to be involved. But it's hard for us at *OPS* to have any feelings about war other than a deep, nostalgic love, as we reminisce about all the great games that 'war' has given us. In our opinion war is great, war is beautiful, war is our own personal slice of gaming heaven. Put that in your pipe and smoke it, grandad.

Well, maybe that's slightly insensitive. Honestly though, after playing the sexy *Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter 2* it's hard to be anything but enthusiastic about the art of war – especially when it's so gorgeously rendered in stunning HD. War has literally never looked so good.

Set in the near future in various areas of Mexico, *GRAW 2* has you bringing swift, deadly justice to a vague terrorist group in a mission to help good ol' Uncle Sam bring democracy to the world. But despite the wince-worthy storyline, beneath lies an accessible, yet in-depth, tactical shooter that will grab you by the balls graphically and then ease you off gently with its well-designed gameplay.

This time around *GRAW 2* is all about

the gadgets. The Cypher was one of the first man-toys we got to play with, and it turned out to be cooler than Axl Rose in Greenland eating ice cream in an igloo. A completely controllable flying thingy, you can use the Cypher to scope out enemies from above, registering their positions automatically to the soldier's HUD, so you know exactly where they are. After that it's a simple matter of pumping some lead death into their guts. How'd you like them apples, hombre?

The MULE is another slobberknocker, an unmanned vehicle that provides both cover and weaponry for you and your team. Looking like a cross between a tank and Arnold Schwarzenegger's personal Humvee, the MULE is an extremely useful addition to the *Ghost Recon* universe, especially since a huge aspect of this game relies on shooting from cover. Having a huge ass moveable tank tends to come in quite handy for this purpose.

What makes *GRAW 2* compelling, however, is the real sense of weight and realism that the characters and the weaponry have. The sound and movement of the characters really helps draw you into the experience, and when you fire an

insanely powerful weapon you can almost feel the weight behind it. *GRAW 2* is the authentic war experience it claims to be.

It helps, of course, that the whole thing just looks ridiculously good. Particle effects, motion blur, and the awesome explosion physics all add to the experience. It's hard not to be amazed when the heat waves and dust are obscuring your vision as you lie in prone stance just trying to avoid bullets. The environments, the weapons, the gadgets, the whole experience is as real as it gets. If you love war as much as we do, you'll be checking for this game when it drops in autumn. **— Mark Serrels**

WHAT THEY SAY:

■ "The cutting-edge physics and particle systems will show you some of the most intense and realistic explosions, smoke, and environment destruction ever seen in a videogame."

WHAT WE SAY:

■ Looks great, sounds great, feels great, and plays great. *GRAW 2* looks set to redefine 'awesome' with the definitive authentic war experience.

HASTA LA VISTA

Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter 2 has a plot that makes *Commando* seem like Shakespeare, and a voice script to match, but who really gives a crap? Set in Mexico, the game gives you many opportunities to maim, murder, and generally just blow up lots and lots of Mexican insurgents. The best part is watching them spout every Spanish speaking stereotype known to man, as you send them to their death, muttering something about 'hombres', 'amigos' and an 'ai ai ai' every now and then.



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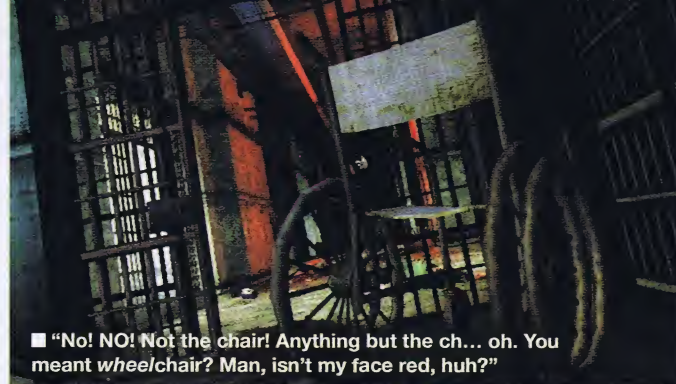
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PS3 PS2 PSP PREVIEW

■ **GENRE:** STEALTH/ACTION
■ **PLAYERS:** 1
■ **RELEASE:** JULY 2007
■ **DISTRIBUTOR:** ROCKSTAR
■ **DEVELOPER:** ROCKSTAR LONDON
■ **WEB:** www.rockstargames.com



■ "No! NO! Not the chair! Anything but the ch... oh. You meant *wheelchair*? Man, isn't my face red, huh?"



■ "Heh heh heh. I'm home free. They'll NEVER hit a guy wearing glasses. It's against the Geneva Convention!"



■ "Hmmm. I guess he was telling the truth after all. Somebody else must be smuggling drugs in via their ass." "Should we get him some ice?" "Good idea. Make it a lot though - I went a little crazy back there! This nightstick has a mind of its own, you know?"

MANHUNT 2

Its hunting season...

Very few games achieve the notoriety of *Manhunt*. As a result of the OFLC Review Board's decision to refuse the game classification, *Manhunt* has gained a level of infamy that will no doubt affect the reception of Rockstar's latest addition to the franchise, *Manhunt 2*, when it's released in July this year. Causing a media storm upon its release, the original game gained its reputation through a combination of its subversive storyline, and more importantly its ridiculously gory (yet inventive) means of murder.

From what we've seen of *Manhunt 2*, so far Rockstar hasn't made any concessions whatsoever to the Jack Thompsons and the OFLCs of the world; if

anything they've stuck up a defiant middle finger and made the game even more brutal than ever. And despite the fact that we're pretty confident *Manhunt 2* will make it past the censors, believe us when we say, it's going to be a pretty tight squeeze.

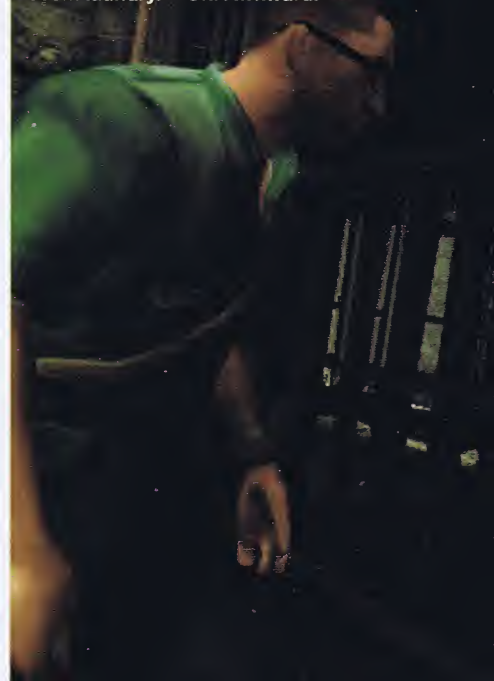
LAMBS TO THE SLAUGHTER

Playing the role of Daniel Lamb, *Manhunt 2* begins in the depths of the most bizarre insane asylum this side of 12 Monkeys. After a freak electrical storm knocks out the electricity, and hence the security, the game begins with Lamb's attempt at escaping from the asylum. From this point on a series of events helps unravel the reasons for Daniel's original madness.

The sense of atmosphere and dread that was prevalent in the original *Manhunt* has translated extremely well to the sequel, resulting in a game that is a genuinely terrifying experience. The opening sequence of the game will have you dribbling in your pants as you slowly make your way through the asylum, avoiding the other inmates in addition to the numerous terrifying male nurses.

True to the traditions of the horror genre, the use of sound in *Manhunt 2* is pivotal to the atmosphere of the game, and in many ways it's essential to the gameplay itself. The screams of your victims and the howls of the insane help increase the general fear factor and keep you on the

■ "Hey, are you here for my conjugal visit?" "Er, no. It's Daniel. From laundry." "Oh. Awkward."



edge of your seat constantly, but Rockstar has cleverly utilised sound dynamics that affect the outcome of the game and the behaviour of the AI.

For example, if players tread softly, it's possible to hear the heavy footsteps of your enemies, helping you to work out their position and anticipate their movements. Conversely, however, if you make too much noise enemies will quickly hear and come after you, instantly removing any element of surprise you may have had previously.

THE HUNTER BECOMES THE HUNTED...

Using stealth is pretty much essential in *Manhunt 2* if you want to make any progress throughout the game. Unlike most stealth games on the market, storming through levels all guns blazin' is not an option, and even if it was, you would lose all access to a huge dimension

of *Manhunt*'s gameplay: the executions.

Yes, the executions have returned, and they are as ridiculously brutal as ever, making players squirm and chuckle in equal measure. The system in the original *Manhunt* remains; there are three different levels of execution: hasty, violent, and gruesome. By sneaking up behind enemies, players can commit any level of murder depending on how long you wait until releasing the **Ⓢ** button and actually committing the crime.

Some of the gruesome executions are particularly disturbing, and some of them are just plain wrong. Using a set of wire cutters, for example, we saw Daniel Lamb drop to his knees behind a bad guy and literally rip a guy's testicles off, surely a fate worse than death. We honestly couldn't think of a worse way to go.

But Rockstar has still managed to outdo itself on the blood and death front with the latest addition to the *Manhunt* franchise – environmental kills. This new game dynamic allows you to use your



■ "Phew, if I escape now I can still catch *The O.C.* Those crazy rich scamps, what WON'T they do?"

"The sense of atmosphere and dread that was prevalent in the original *Manhunt* has translated extremely well to the sequel, resulting in a genuinely terrifying experience."

surrounds to find new, creative ways to brutalise and maim your victims. In the short demo we played through we managed to strangle someone to death with a telephone cord and slam someone's head into a dodgily wired fuse box. Pretty awesome if you ask us.

The overall quality of *Manhunt 2*'s general presentation was extremely high. Not only is the game packed full of inventive game mechanics, but the graphics, especially the lighting, are very impressive considering the limitations of the PS2. The shadows in particular were completely convincing, and some of the effects put us in mind of the almost next gen gorgeousness of *Resident Evil 4*, which is a pretty huge compliment.

We were extremely impressed with what we saw of *Manhunt 2*. It's possibly the best looking Rockstar game so far, and the gameplay updates looked fresh, original and fun. We just hope that it manages to pass through the censors unscathed. If *Manhunt 2* were to be

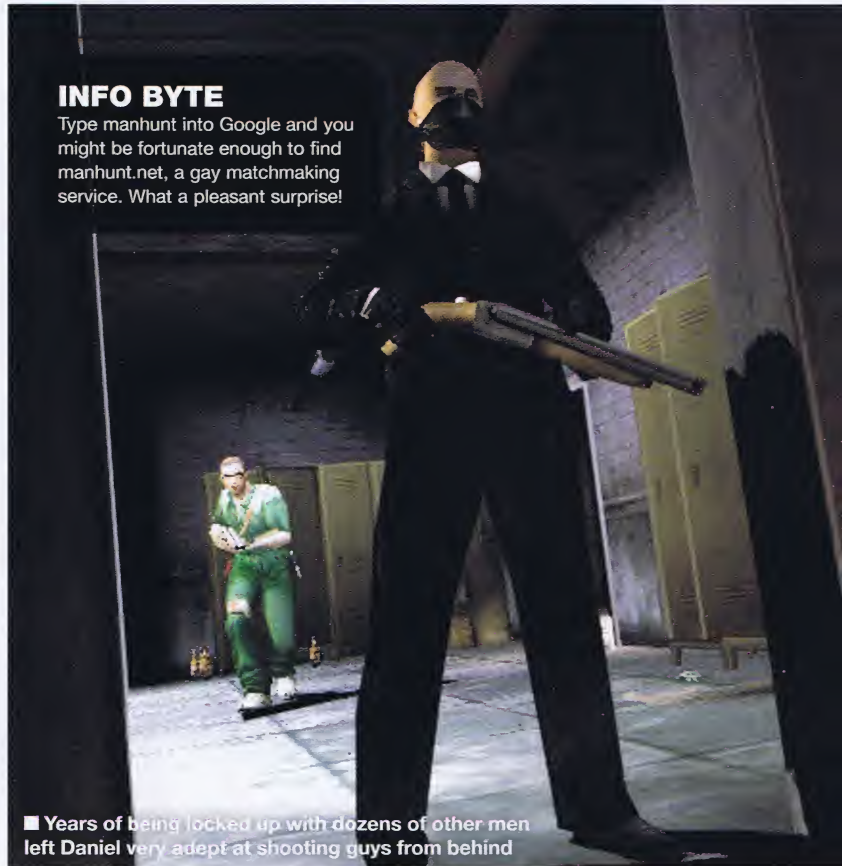
YOU CAN'T SEE ME!

Like the original, *Manhunt 2* allows you to hide in the shadows, pretty much unseen, before brutally assassinating the poor chap you were initially running from. This time around, however, things are a bit more tricky. If a hunter approaches you while you are fully hiding in the shadows, there is still a slight chance that you will be spotted. When this happens the game forces you into a mini-game situation a la *Fahrenheit* and *God of War*, and if you fail it's on like Donkey Kong. You'll have to either fight back or find a better hiding spot.

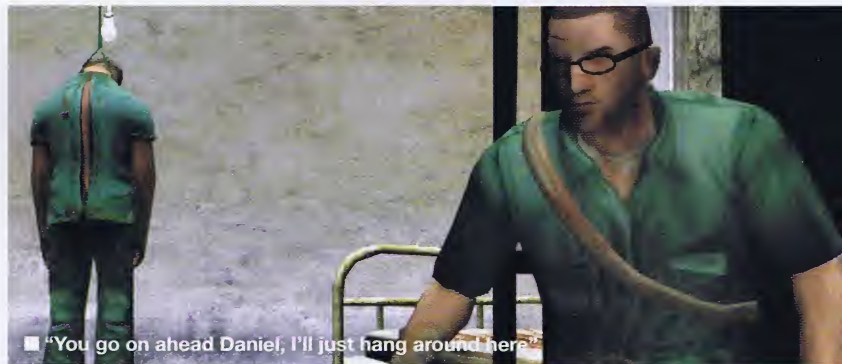


INFO BYTE

Type manhunt into Google and you might be fortunate enough to find manhunt.net, a gay matchmaking service. What a pleasant surprise!



■ Years of being locked up with dozens of other men left Daniel very adept at shooting guys from behind



■ "You go on ahead Daniel, I'll just hang around here"

chopped and neutered beyond recognition or, even worse, totally banned, it would be a complete shame.

So please, OFLC, if you're listening, please don't deprive us of what could turn out to be a completely awesome game... we're begging you: let us have our *Manhunt*! **Mark Serrels**

WHAT THEY SAY:

■ "We have tried to create a game that stays close to the original concept of chilling suspense and stealth..."

WHAT WE SAY:

■ We're shitting our pants already

PS3 PS2 PSP PREVIEW

■ **GENRE:** ADVENTURE
■ **PLAYERS:** 1
■ **RELEASE:** MAY 2007
■ **DISTRIBUTOR:** ATARI
■ **DEVELOPER:** CRYSTAL DYNAMICS
■ **WEB:** www.crystald.com



LARA CROFT: TOMB RAIDER ANNIVERSARY

Lara returns after her biggest bout of cosmetic surgery yet

What does a fine piece of relic-digging totty do after a top boob job, head-to-toe bodily reconstruction, and the resurrection of her top tier franchise? If you're Lara Croft, you go back to the revolution that started it all, brush in one hand, and can of PS2 wham-bam in the other. Finally, after 10 years of fame, *Lara Croft: Tomb Raider Anniversary* is set to incorporate all the glitzy visual and gameplay improvements of the recent *Tomb Raider: Legend* into a retrofitted recreation of the original PSone classic.

Despite the cherry not popping until May, Atari recently allowed us some exclusive sexy time with an early build that featured Lara spelunking her way through the Peruvian caves of the first mission. After just a few areas it was obvious that this was how the original *Tomb Raider*

was meant to be played. Imagine tangoing cheek to cheek with a real life vixen that's the mirror image of your old inflatable Big Boobs Betty doll, and you've got some idea of what you're in for. It's nostalgia, but reborn and maximised.

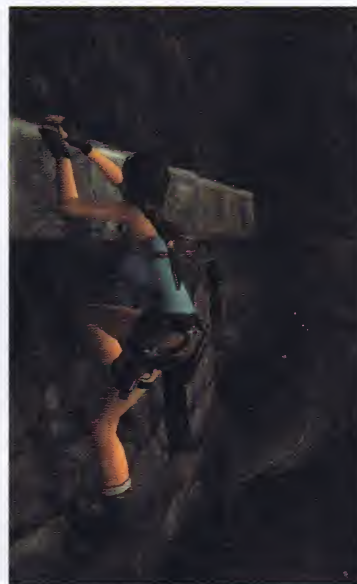
Unfortunately there's no lesbian love interest, no whip and latex boots, no promiscuous shower scene under a waterfall as Lara tries to pry a dozen or so leeches off her bodily extremities as a young Puerto Rican boy, on the verge of manhood, watches from hiding.

No, all the new stuff seems to be from *Legend*. That includes the nifty grappling hook, a bunch of new acrobatic animations, and some cool bullet time dodge-and-kill techniques Lara can perform when attacked by enemies.

We've talked additions, but now it's

time to talk improvements, and considering how good the balance of the original game was, it's this area that *TRA* will earn the majority of its praise. Apart from the obvious carryover enhancements of Lara's lady lines from *Legend*, the game's pace and, crucially, Lara's movement, have been pimped to the nines. Overly long sprints have been compressed to keep the pace up, areas that were too butt-ugly or bland have been reimagined and MOST IMPORTANTLY, when you tell Lara to jump, she bites her bottom lip and rasps "how damn high".

Yep, we like what we played. With revamped design and a new smokin' look, *TRA* is shaping up to be a fresh experience for Lara fans of old and a fresh play thing for newcomers eager to fall in digital love for the very first time. **James Ellis**



WHAT THEY SAY:

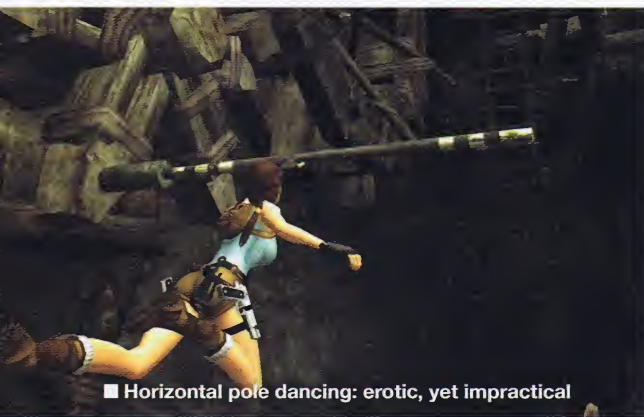
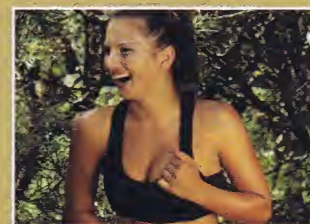
■ "...it will appeal not only to the loyal fans of the *Tomb Raider* series but will also attract a totally new audience."

WHAT WE SAY:

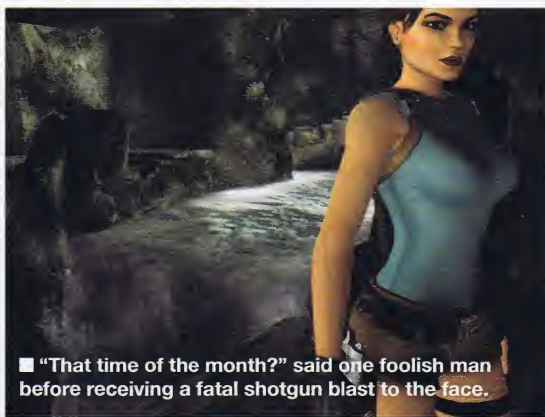
■ Will yield a beat-it down boxer pants boner. No question.

THE OTHER BLOODY AUSTRALIAN LARA

In case you don't have Foxtel and aren't available to watch it 24/7, we thought we'd remind you of what transpired when Atari decided to reignite the Lara flare last year. No doubt an idea straight from an overactive scrotum (of which we know plenty about), Atari joined forces with *FHM* to seek out Australia's Lara Croft equivalent in a reality TV affair that aimed to milk the spunk of male couch potatoes. There were lots of chicks with their mam hangers hanging out while automatic weapons were fired – lots of struggling, sweating female sinews, burdened by clothing. It was completely degrading to women... (and no, you cannot borrow our tape.)



■ Horizontal pole dancing: erotic, yet impractical



■ "That time of the month?" said one foolish man before receiving a fatal shotgun blast to the face.



■ "Fido, that is the last time you shit on my carpet"



PS3 PS2 PSP PREVIEW

■ **GENRE:** ACTION-RACING
■ **PLAYERS:** 1-2
■ **RELEASE:** WINTER 2007
■ **DISTRIBUTOR:** SONY
■ **DEVELOPER:** BIG BIG STUDIOS
■ **WEB:** www.bigbigstudios.com



INFO BYTE

Despite the huge amount of playable vehicles, you can actually go after criminals on foot. With the huge, varied methods of transport, however, we're just not sure if you'd really want to.

■ "Bang Bang! Ha ha, you're dead...
Crap, this isn't a gun, it's a hairdryer!"

PURSUIT FORCE: EXTREME JUSTICE

Use the force... to um... pursue things

The original *Pursuit Force*, on the PSP, was a game that let players do what they have always wanted to do: jump like a crazy man from one moving vehicle to another, à la every cop movie ever made, without having to worry about the real life consequences, i.e. pain and certain death (those friction burns sting like hell too, damn it!)

The sequel to this game *Pursuit Force: Extreme Justice*, on the PS2, allows gamers to do pretty much the same thing. You are part of an elite police group known as 'Pursuit Force' and it is your job to clean up Capital City by literally driving all

the gangs out of town.

But by 'drive' we don't just mean using your standard four-wheeled automobiles, because *Pursuit Force: Extreme Justice* allows you to get busy in a plethora of vehicles, including motorcycles, side-cars, jet skis and hovercraft. Pretty much anything that is propelled by some sort of engine is driveable here, making *Extreme Justice* one of the most versatile games out there.

But this vehicular axis of awesome doesn't stop there. In addition to the vehicles you can drive, there are others you can actually launch yourself head first

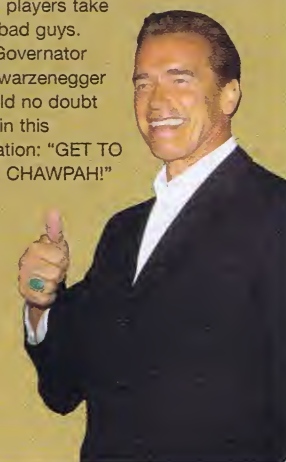
onto. In *Extreme Justice* you can launch yourself onto moving tanks, trains, and – get this – a frickin moving aeroplane. Come on, if your not salivating at the thought of jumping from a moving car to a bloody aeroplane, then you're dead, or possibly some kind of weird zombie-man.

So far so good, but unbelievably, it gets better. One disappointing omission from the original PSP game was the multiplayer aspect of *Pursuit Force*; really what could be better than jumping from your crappy car, cracking your mate on the bonce, stealing his superior vehicle, then leaving him in your dust to rant and rave about the injustice of it all. Well thankfully BigBig Studios felt the exact same way, and have added a multiplayer component, to what is already looking like a very exciting game.

Add to this some cool slo-mo effects, the 'justice shot' feature (for some reason we find the words 'justice shot' hilarious), and a whole new storyline, and you've got yourself the framework for an excellent action title. Assuming all goes well, and the insane learning curve from the original is rectified, *Pursuit Force: Extreme Justice* could turn out to be a bit of a humdinger. We can't wait until this one jumps crazily from production onto store shelves this winter. **Mark Serrels**

COME ON! DO IT!

Amongst all the vehicular insanity of this preview we almost forgot that in *Pursuit Force: Extreme Justice* you actually get to ride a helicopter, and better still, shoot people from the helicopter. Apparently every 'chopper' (heh heh, we said 'chopper') features mounted (heh heh, we said 'mounted') high calibre guns, which can apparently cause maximum destruction and help players take out bad guys. As Governor Schwarzenegger would no doubt say in this situation: "GET TO THE CHAWPAH!"



WHAT THEY SAY:

■ "*Pursuit Force: Extreme Justice* demands new levels of speed and a fresh approach to law enforcement"

WHAT WE SAY:

■ If the minor problems in the original can be ironed out, we could be looking at something very special indeed,



■ "I've hit the ejector seat button instead of the CD eject again. Dammit! I'm such an idiot"

PS3 PS2 PSP PREVIEW

■ **GENRE:** RPG
■ **PLAYERS:** 1
■ **RELEASE:** JUNE 2007
■ **DISTRIBUTOR:** SONY
■ **DEVELOPER:** LEVEL 5
■ **WEB:** www.au.playstation.com



■ "Vroom vroom!" "Um...you forgot to turn the engine on..." "Just shut up, you have to ruin everything."

ROGUE GALAXY

It's a Rogue's time to go... to a galaxy far, far away

To say we were chomping at the bit to get our hands on *Rogue Galaxy* would be a gross understatement. It was like getting an invitation to do the no pants dance with a room full of models after their eighth round of cocktails. Really... how could we not be a little antsy? The same guys who brought you *Dark Cloud* and *Dragon Quest VIII* were finally bringing their latest and greatest down under. Oh happy happy days!

Once given the chance to sink our teeth into it, we got to play all the way to the end of the opening credits... woo hooo!! Now before you start getting your panties in a twist, remember that this is an RPG – so playing to the end of the credits involves a good couple of hours. And that's just our first glimpse!

You play orphaned, wide-eyed farm boy Luke Skywalker... err... Jaster Rogue, on the desert planet of Tatooine... whoops... planet Rosa, that is. Through a case of mistaken identity you are confused with legendary bounty hunter Desert Claw by an effeminate robot named C3PO...

sorry... robot named Steve, and take off with a rag tag group of misfit pirates to find a lost planet, save the universe and grab some space booty. Okay. By now you're getting the point that this has more than a few similarities with another sprawling space epic. But this is no half-hearted rip off – this is a drop dead gorgeous action RPG, and to be perfectly honest we're dying to see the rest of it.

So far we've managed to master combat, defend our home town from numerous types of nasty, defeat a gigantic fire spewing Salamander (using a gun that shot platforms for us jump onto said beastie's back so we could take a stab at its heart with our newly acquired sword), escape into the desert, get attacked by several seriously massive *Dune*-inspired sand worms, get saved by a gorgeous pirate's daughter, catapulted into a wormhole that sent us crashing onto a jungle planet after coming off second best in a tussle with some humungous space stingrays-type things... whew! How's that for a first glimpse?

We barely had a chance to stop and admire how beautiful the cell-shaded graphics were, both in simple gameplay and glorious cinematics. We nearly didn't notice that there were almost no loading times at all and that the seamless action was hard and fast, with a steep but fair learning curve. Luckily for us it came supplied with an oxygen mask so we could remember to breathe... when we had a split-second or two to catch our breath!

If this is what the first nibble has to offer, bring on June so we can take another couple of bites out of this apple and see how it tastes. **— Dave Kozicki**

WHAT THEY SAY:

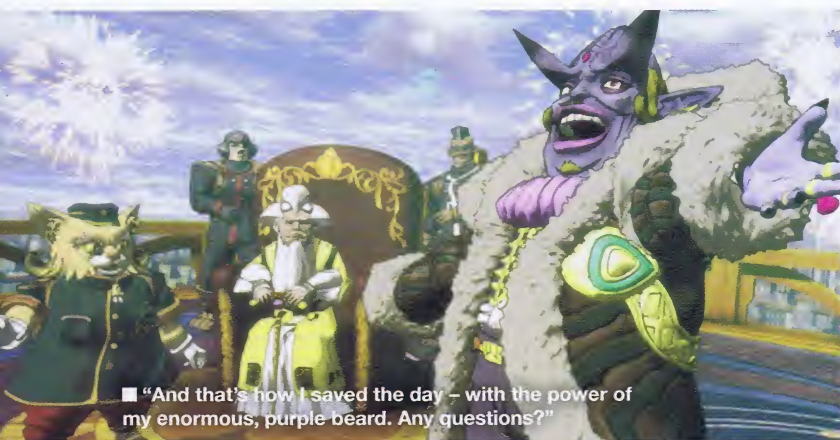
■ "Level-5 once again provides RPG fans with visually stunning backdrops, and an immersive storyline"

WHAT WE SAY:

■ "Square Enix, watch your back... some pirates are gunning for you! And they got some serious game!"

ERR... A LITTLE HELP?

In keeping with the non-stop action, *Rogue Galaxy* keeps you posted on how your party is faring mid battle. Rather than pausing and plodding along, a warning with a five second timer flashes on-screen when a character is poisoned or low on health, or even powered up and ready deliver a devastating attack. If your fingers are nimble enough, quickly hitting the right button can swing the course of the skirmish in your favour without those pesky turn-based moves... hurrah!



■ "And that's how I saved the day – with the power of my enormous, purple beard. Any questions?"



■ "Get in! Hurry up, there's no time! McDonalds breakfast ends in 20 minutes!"



■ "Okay, fine! You can go first, but I swear this is the last time I'm stirring your porridge"



■ "Of course it's safe in my unmarked white van! Come on! The puppies and candy are waiting!"



www.playstation.com.au/PS3

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This is living

PLAYSTATION 3

A large Sony Bravia 40-inch HDTV is the central focus, displaying a scene from Spider-Man 3. Spider-Man is in the foreground, looking towards the left. In the background, Venom is seen swinging through a cityscape. The TV is a black model with the 'SONY' logo on the bottom bezel. Below the TV, a Sony 7.1 surround sound system is partially visible, including a receiver and several floor-standing speakers.

WIN

\$7,500 HOME THEATRE PACKAGE!

- BRAVIA 40-INCH HDTV
- 7.1 SURROUND SPEAKERS
- SONY AV RECEIVER
- GAMES AND MOVIE TICKETS!

SPIDER-MANIA

See Spider-Man 3, play the game and win the ultimate Sony home theatre setup!

Serious Home Theatre

If you want to experience *Spider-Man 3* in true cinema quality on your PS3 or PS2 in true cinema quality then you can't go past this amazing setup worth \$7,500. To dazzle your eyes you'll be able to enjoy razor-sharp HD visuals on this 40inch Bravia V Series LCD screen. With HDMI support and 1080i HD visuals, your PS3 will explode off the screen.

You can't have much of an explosion without the ultimate in surround sound, and this is where Sony's AV receiver and 7.1 speaker system comes in. Sony's AV

receiver is an incredibly high-tech piece of kit that ensures you enjoy only the best in both HD visuals and high-fidelity surround sound. It's fully compatible with 1080p video signals over HDMI and is capable of outputting eight channels of uncompressed audio.

To deliver the explosive punch you need in surround sound Sony's 7.1 speaker system is as powerful as it is sexy. Featuring a range of floor standing, satellite speakers and a beefy sub woofer this setup will rock your world.

MORE SPIDER-MANIA

As well as Sony's ultimate home theatre setup, we've got 20 *Spider-Man 3* movie tickets and five copies of both the PS3 and PS2 games up for grabs. With the game arriving on May 2 and the movie in cinemas on May 3, you'll have one hell of an amazing month of Spider-Mania! For your chance to win movie tickets and the game, simply mark your entry 'Spider-Man 3 giveaway', answer the following question and check page 17 for further entry details. Please also mention whether you'd prefer the PS2 or PS3 game.

Question: What is the name of one of the villains in *Spider-Man 3*?



CLICK!
Use your Peter Parker photography skills to snap the perfect Spidey pic!

PLAY SPIDER-MAN 3 AND WIN!

Because this \$7,500 home theatre setup is such an incredible package we need you to get a little creative to win the prize. To enter what you need to do is grab a copy of *Spider-Man 3* on PS3 or PS2 when it releases on May 2nd and send us a picture of your coolest moment in it. It's up to you whether you snap a pose of Spidey swinging through the city in style, webbing six crooks to a lamppost, standing on top of a skyscraper or just beating the piss out

of Sandman. We'll print the coolest and most creative screenshot of the game in a future issue and send the lucky bugger the ultimate home theatre setup.

How to enter:

Get a digital camera, snap a photo of the game on your TV and email the pic to us, marking your entry 'Sony Home Theatre Giveaway'. See page 17 for further entry details

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Shop Till You Drop!

Words: Mark Serrels

Shops, don't you just hate 'em. Grannies in long queues, taking their sweet time counting out the EXACT change for her latest issue of *Woman's Day*, greasy Goths hanging around looking 'tortured', teenage staff with acne and disastrous attempts at facial hair. Kind of makes you want to go all Columbine with a chainsaw, taking them all out in a fit of murderous rage: that'll teach them.

But before you go on a mass killing spree, take a deep breath and fire up your brand spanking new PS3. You don't have to

consign yourself to a murder charge, a life sentence and a bunk below a ridiculously buff paedophile with scary tattoos (unless you're into that sort of thing). Hop on to the PlayStation Store, a multimedia hub of downloadable gaming goodness, and your murderous inclinations will be completely eradicated. An über sexy blend of form and content, the PlayStation Store shows the so-called 'real world' how retail should be done. Shopping is no longer a matter of standing in long queues silencing your murderous rage, or spending hours in shoe shops

with your girlfriend looking slightly sheepish; it's just a matter of signing on to the PlayStation Network, downloading what you want and Bob's your uncle. Done and dusted. Brilliant.

PlayStation Free

The most noticeable thing about the PlayStation Store is that despite the fact that it features a crapload of content across a whole spectrum of media, the whole thing is surprisingly easy to navigate. Divided into three different sections

(featured items, demos, and downloadable games) the Store manages to squeeze in playable demos, trailers of upcoming games, fully downloadable titles, and HD movie trailers for upcoming flicks. The little bugger even manages to give your PSP some of the action, since numerous games from the





stellar PSone back catalogue are also available for download.

The best thing about the PlayStation Store is that a huge amount of this downloadable content is free. Now this might not arouse too much interest if we were talking about movie trailers you've already seen at the cinema, or even video game trailers, but if playable demos of *MotorStorm* and *Gran Turismo HD* don't give you that 'funny feeling' deep down in your loins then something is seriously, seriously wrong. Did we mention that these are free? FREE you fools!

Hell To Pay

But even the games you have to shell out some cash for are great value for money. The crown jewel of the PlayStation Store, as of now, is undoubtedly the fully playable, 1080p, arcade version of *Tekken 5*. It's essentially the same game as the *Dark Resurrection* PSP port, but at \$16.95 it's plenty of bang for your buck, and despite coming up a little short when compared to some of the gorgeous PS3 launch titles, it still looks pretty damn good. For a game that is almost two years old it's none too shabby.

Another humdinger available on the PlayStation Store is a little game called *Blast Factor*. Imagine *Asteroids* on acid, with an intense



graphical update, and you have *Blast Factor*: a game that somehow manages to take a nostalgic, yet relevant, look at a long dead game genre and come out smelling of roses: no mean feat. Hidden beneath a half-arsed story about nano-interception devices, infected specimens and viral swarms, *Blast Factor* is basically a great excuse for some fast, furious, old school blasting action.

World in Motion

Interestingly, the cheap downloadable games in the PlayStation Store, so far, have arguably made the best use of the SIXAXIS motion-sensing PS3 controller. *Blast Factor*, for example, allows you to tilt the entire game screen by tilting the controller left or right. Another downloadable game, *Super Rub a Dub*, takes the SIXAXIS' motion-sensing capabilities to a new level.

Negating the use for buttons, or any traditional control methods, *Super Rub a Dub* is controlled

completely by motion. Set in an enormous bath tub it is your goal to get rid of all the rubber ducks by tilting the controller and moving the entire bath tub itself. This might sound lamer than a three legged horse with cerebral palsy, but it's actually fun as hell. Trying to balance ten rubber ducks while avoiding all the pitfalls in the bath tub, such as wind-up sharks (who tend to constantly feast on your little duckies just for the hell of it) harks back to the days of those fiddly ball-bearing maze toys. Frustrating yet fun.

Older games such as *Lemmings* and *Q-Bert* (ask your Dad) also make an appearance on the PlayStation store with full graphical updates and a polished sheen. *Lemmings*, in particular, takes the traditional puzzle gameplay found in earlier versions and adapts it perfectly to the SIXAXIS controller. Developed by Team 17, the same crew responsible for the PSP version, the PS3 version of *Lemmings* is perfect for fans of the old games, or those interested in

what the fuss was about the first time around.

Add to this the growing array of PSone games available and you have yourself a pretty awesome range of downloads, but the best part is that the PlayStation Store will constantly be updated with new trailers, games, and other stuff well worth a gander. Considering the whole service is free, it's a pretty awesome package. If you're tighter than the proverbial duck's arse, there's still plenty of content, but even the stuff you have to pay for is very reasonably priced. Sony has also promised that some additional content for existing games will soon be available in the store, allowing you to get some extra mileage out of your older games. All things considered it's hard to find fault with the PlayStation Store. If anything, it's a whole lot better than dealing with that fat, spotty teenager at your local EB, and infinitely more hygienic. If Sony has anything to do with it, shopping, as we know it, has just changed for the better. ♫

Retail Therapy: You'll never have to deal with these guys again...

Grannies

Blocking escalators, holding up queues, smelling like urine and general bodily decay;

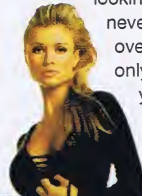
thanks to Sony you will never have to deal with these venomous octogenarians again; unless you have to visit your grandparents. (Shudder...)



Girlfriends

Making you stand outside changing rooms feeling awkward, spending hours

looking at shoes they will never buy; those days are over. Tell your missus the only shopping spree you'll be having together is on the PlayStation Store, that's our advice.



Spotty Store Clerks

Wavering high-pitched teenage voices teetering ever so closely on the edge of actually breaking,

spots on the spot, hair greasy enough to fry an egg on. Begone! Foul harpy. We have no further need for you. We now have the PlayStation Store for our retail needs.



CUNNING

Stuntman, a unique action-racer that relied on explosive set-pieces, was a marked departure from your everyday driving title. But that was five long years ago, and a lot has happened since then. With a new developer, a new publisher and a new console, does the series have enough gas in the tank for a second take?

When Atari's financial woes forced the company to pawn a great deal of its assets and internal studios, the tentatively titled *Stuntman 2* and its developer Paradigm Studios were among the first to go – scooped up by THQ. Shortly afterwards the staff of original *Stuntman* developer, Reflections, were snatched by Ubisoft, along with the *Driver* series.

But although what those Frenchies at Ubisoft are doing with *Driver* remains a mystery, THQ has finally let us get our hands on the newly christened *Stuntman: Ignition* at its annual Gamer's Day in sunny San Francisco.

The verdict? It's a truckload of fun.

LIGHTS...

Stuntman, for the unfamiliar, centred on a simple premise. Casting you as a Hollywood stunt driver you needed to successfully crash, smash and sail through six

motion pictures, providing the vehicular eye-candy for all of them. Naturally, for gameplay's sake the game took a little creative license with the way stunts are usually performed. Instead of breaking a sequence up into a number of different takes, you were required to pull off entire runs at once (often with unerring perfection). For those who mastered it, it was an absolute hoot. For those who didn't master it, however, it was like crushing your wedding tackle in a garlic press. It was like being stuck in a departure lounge listening to Wet Wet Wet on repeat. It was like arguing with a creationist (oooooh...). It was torture on a grand scale. It wasn't quite as tough as the borderline impossible *Shinobi*, but it was up there


with *Devil May Cry 3* and *Maximo and the Army of Zin* as one of the toughest mistresses on PS2.

We don't imagine being bent over and reamed by an equally tough sequel would be too high on anyone's list of priorities. Fortunately, Paradigm is aware of this.

"The original game was successful in many respects, but players had some consistent feedback about the difficulty and long reload times," says Shawn Wright, lead designer on *Stuntman: Ignition*.

"We've taken the best parts of the game and made them better and greatly improved on the shortcomings."

Instead of having one mistake mean you'll need to start over, *Ignition* will allow you to botch up to five stunts before the director



■ You'll be fine as long as you don't lose your head...

■ "Damn it, we're too late! Now we'll NEVER find out the 11 secret herbs and spices!"

STUNTS

WORDS: LUKE REILLY

calls, "Cut!" Missing stunts won't leave you with a great score and any unlockables to be earned will go wanting, but you WILL be able to press on regardless. It's also worth noting that the lengthy load times between reattempts have been ironed out, so if you do screw up you'll be able to get stuck back in immediately. *Ignition* is still just as tough to perfect as the original (arguably tougher, in fact) but the margin for error is wider.

You can stumble your way through a stunt and, assuming you're not completely hopeless, scrape by with an embarrassingly low, yet passable, score. But if you want a five-star rating and a seven-figure score you'll need to nail EVERYTHING – and that means linking your entire run together in one enormous multiplier.

Unlike the original you're

actually scored on how well you pull off each task. Getting the director's requests right nets you the most points, but you aren't limited to the set stunts. You can link the director's stunts with freestyle stunts of your own to keep your multiplier building. The director may want you to crash through a

flick set in San Francisco, which will be the penultimate level. There was no sign of the distinctly *Mad Max*-esque film that was heavily featured in the first batch of screenshots late last year. The disaster flick, 'Aftershock', reminded us of *Volcano* (only less 'crap') or *Dante's Peak* (only... less 'crap') – lots of lava, exploding cars, giant flaming boulders, collapsing buildings, fissures in the ground and general chaos. The cop film, 'Overdrive', owed a lot to the likes

burning barn and squeeze between two moving cars, but the distance from the first stunt to the second is too great to chain the two together.

Fortunately, drifting, near misses, extra airtime and other improvised tricks will link the stunts and keep the combo building. Like we mentioned, it's possible to link a whole run together in one combo – *Tony Hawk's* style. After 12 Coronas and one too many miniature hamburgers we were in no state to do anything of the sort, but we did see it done – and it was damn impressive.

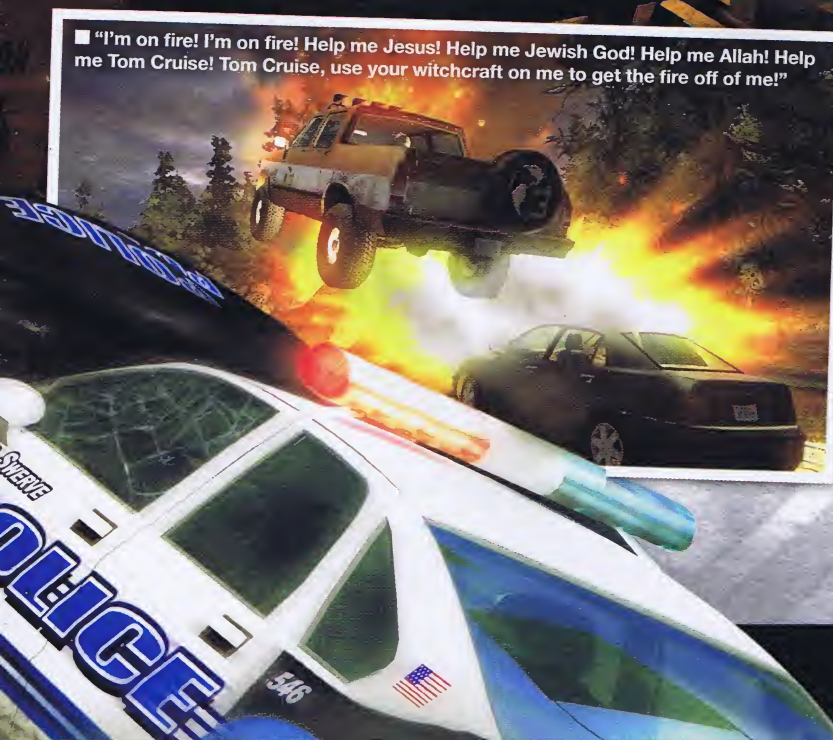
CAMERA...

Two of the six 'movies' that feature in *Stuntman: Ignition* were on show at Gamer's Day. One of them, which we were told would be the first level, was a disaster movie set somewhere in rural North America. The other was a detective

of *Bullitt*, *Metro* and even *The Rock*. The muscle car chase screamed Steve McQueen, weaving in and out of cable cars smacked of *Metro* and the yellow supercar that appeared in the last section was uncannily similar to the equally yellow Ferrari Nic Cage tore up the streets of San Fran in during *The Rock*.

The action is laid on thick and fast so it's tough to recall every particularly neat trick we were required to pull off in

■ "I'm on fire! I'm on fire! Help me Jesus! Help me Jewish God! Help me Allah! Help me Tom Cruise! Tom Cruise, use your witchcraft on me to get the fire off of me!"



PUSHING THE ENVELOPE

Stunt drivers have been keeping us glued to our seats stuffing popcorn into our mouths for decades. These days CGI effects are increasingly being used to replace actual stunts in films, but here's a look at some of the craziest, zaniest and most impressive stunts in cinema.

Smokey and the Bandit II

Stuntman Buddy Joe Hooker jumps a '73 Dodge Polara more than 150 feet, suffering compressed vertebra and setting a world record.

Live and Let Die

Stuntman Jerry Comeaux jumps a speedboat 70 feet over a police car setting a record that remained for 15 years.

The Great Escape

Stuntman Bud Elkins jumps a motorcycle 60 feet over a border fence.

Casino Royale

Adam Kirley rolls a \$300,000 Aston Martin DBS with the aid of an air-powered cannon. The car completes seven full rolls, a world record.

The Fast and the Furious

Included a CGI-free 360 roll jump in a '68 Dodge Charger, complete with a four wheel landing.

Gone in 60 Seconds

The final jump saw star, director and stunt driver H.B. Halicki soar 30 feet high and cover 128 feet. He suffered a compressed spine.

The Man with the Golden Gun

Stuntman "Bumps" Williard performs an amazing 360-degree roll over a broken bridge.

Ronin

The greatest car chase flick this side of *Bullitt*, drivers reach speeds of up to 180km/h in the narrow streets of Nice and Paris.

The Dukes of Hazzard

The jumps didn't involve stunt drivers (just catapults) but with Kiwi drift star Rhys Millen in The General Lee the powerslides are completely bananas.

Bullitt

A '68 Dodge Charger and a '68 Ford Mustang GT tear up and down the hills of San Francisco. It was the first car chase shot at true speed – the cars nudged 180km/h.

The Bourne Identity

A Mini is driven down a set of stairs during a breathtaking chase through Paris.

each film (about as tough as it is to find a kebab in the San Fran CBD at midnight on a Thursday night, or an American beer that doesn't taste like URINE). However, a few of the more memorable moments from 'Aftershock' included ploughing through a burning barn, leaping over a river of lava, dousing a flaming car in a car wash and pulling a reverse 180 in a collapsing multistorey car park. 'Overdrive' wasn't light on the action either – we were hurtling over packed taxi ranks, landing on a cargo ship, avoiding exploding trams and leapfrogging across the roofs of several warehouses to smash into a low-flying helicopter.

ACTION!

We spent quite a bit of time with the game and, bearing in mind we haven't seen the stunt arena or the multiplayer segments yet, came away happy that Paradigm had improved on the original in almost every way. The new scoring system really hones in on that "just-one-more-go" mindset that kept your pockets empty of change in the halcyon days of addictive arcade gaming. The crisp and colourful visuals are a real treat (each stage is packed with ambient activity – explosions, buzzing extras and film crews abound). The difficulty curve appears far less intimidating (although our time was brief).

However, there is one exception. Long time *Driver* and *Stuntman* devotees will be used to a certain type of handling, a physics model tailor made for hulking muscle cars to devour 90 degree corners in flashy, screaming powerslides. That's how it's always been, but not everyone

adored it as much as us, and nor did Paradigm.

"*Stuntman* was known for realistic physics and fun driving across a wide variety of vehicles," explains Wright. "We wanted to maintain that realism while upgrading the physics system to a more capable third party product."

"We've spent a lot of time tuning the response for each vehicle, including the sports car in 'Overdrive' to the 4x4s of 'Aftershock'. We have to balance the precision driving elements with high speed action to make sure players get a huge thrill with every vehicle they drive."

The result is a game that wears its *Stuntman* heritage proudly on its sleeve (there's no way you could mistake it for anything else) but FEELS decidedly different. It's now more arcade-like – simpler and more accessible, but a little stickier.

Now, none of this is to say *Ignition* is any less fun as a result of the handling revision. You'd be mistaken to assume that. While we were thrown initially, many of you may find the new handling more to your tastes. Again, it's not bad, just different – but we'd be remiss not to mention it. So you can stop freaking out. Take a breath. Chew some aspirin.

Perhaps the biggest praise we can heap upon *Ignition* at this stage of its development is that it's far better than we thought it would be. We imagined it would be decent, but expected the developer and publisher juggling act would've taken its toll on the fledgling sequel. Not so. It's more than decent, in fact. It's great.

And if the stunt arena is up to scratch it could be even better. **A**

■ "Man, this forest isn't the only thing burning – this bike is hell on my crotch!"



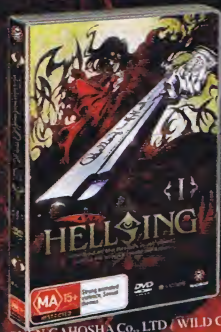
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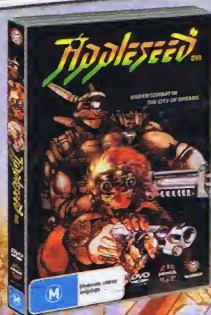


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FLEEN LIED



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Devil's Plaything

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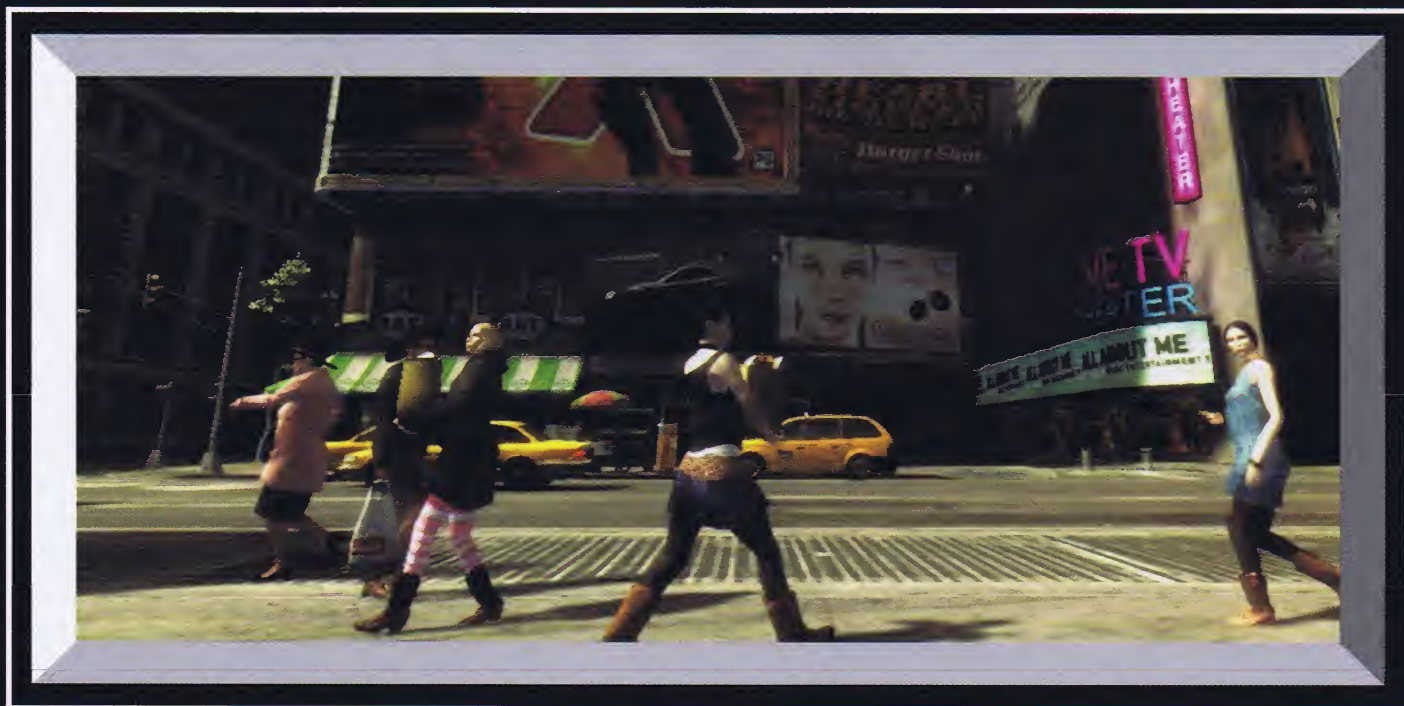
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IV

Things will be different. That's the message from *GTA IV*. How different? What things? The short trailer we just glimpsed didn't hold the answers, but it's sure as hell got us excited. The trailer, itself a parody of Godfrey Reggio's 1982 *Koyaanisqatsi* (even using the film's original score and penchant for time-lapse photography), revealed tantalisingly little but it was suitably stirring. Rockstar is taking us back to the city that started it all, so here's a glimpse at the first images from what could be the game of the decade.





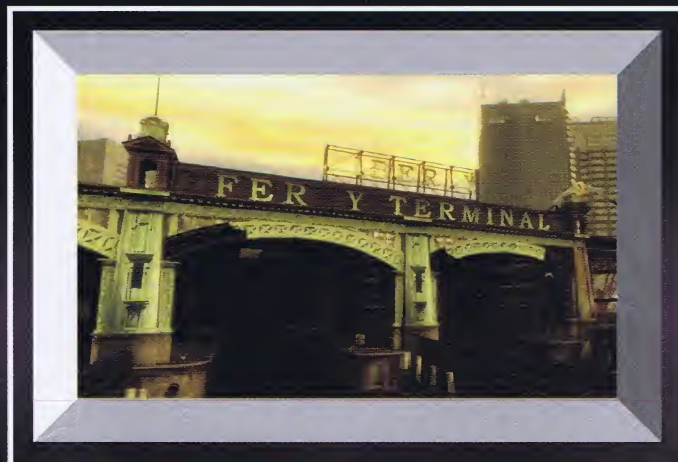
AS well as looking nigh on photo-realistic this train brings back memories of *GTAIII*. And well it should. After the semi-sequels that were *Vice City* and *San Andreas*, *GTAIV* is the first true sequel to the legendary *GTAIII*, so it's only fitting that it returns to the New York-inspired Liberty City. Considering how much bigger Liberty City is in the sequel we expect public transport to play a bigger role.



GTA has always been famous for its dynamic real-time environments, reacting to different times of the day, different weather, etc. The lighting here is just spectacular; set at twilight the whole scene seems to reflect that time of day just before the sun sets. Note also the detail in even the most insignificant buildings; Rockstar is definitely *not* cutting corners with this game.



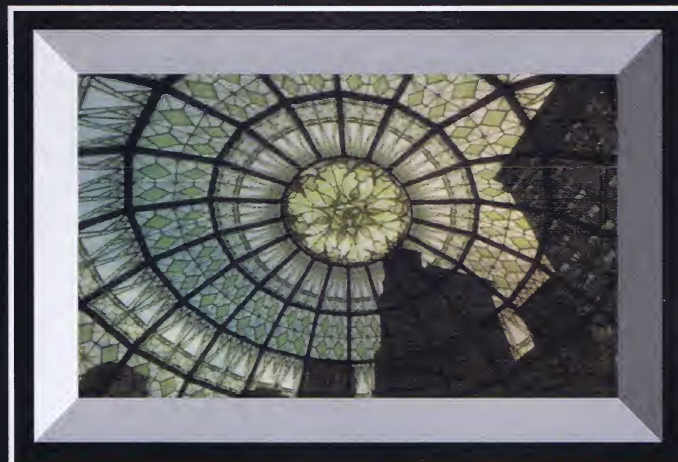
WELL, this just *has* to be some kind of Coney Island-style carnival. What's it called? No idea – but Rockstar's version of Coney Island's Cyclone appears to be the Screamer. The Coney-esque carnival tells us that, if the new Liberty City is closely modelled on the real NYC, you can expect it to expand far beyond the CBD and into the suburbs. The vehicle also suggests a contemporary timeframe.



FERRIES played a huge role in *Liberty City Stories* on PSP and, with the return to the city that started it all, it's fitting that ferries also feature in *GTAIV*. We're looking forward to possibly being able to jack these bad boys and, considering the awesome views that can be seen from the Staten Island ferry in New York, we're hoping for some spectacular views of the Liberty City skyline.



ROCKSTAR has assured us that the trailer that these images have been taken from is running on *GTAIV*'s real-time gameplay engine. Considering the still unmatched *San Andreas* was made in two short years we knew to expect something truly amazing from the three years Rockstar has spent on *GTAIV*, but not even in our wildest dreams did we expect such a stunning graphics engine.



THIS highly elaborate window work looks uncannily similar to the snazzy glass dome at Manhattan's Grand Central Station. What does it tell us? Aside from the fact we can again expect to be able to catch a train and that Liberty City is set to be far more closely aligned to the real NYC, not much. Check out the detail though – it's bloody remarkable. Next gen arriving on platform 3 – all aboard!



NOTHING too exciting here, but the GetaLife building (naturally a good-natured poke at MetLife, the US insurance company) does indicate that, despite *GTA/IV* appearing far grittier than any of its forebears, Rockstar hasn't lost its sense of humour. The *GTA* series has always been packed with pop culture digs and odd twists on real products and *GTA/IV* doesn't look to be an exception.



"GIVE me your tired, your poor, Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, The wretched refuse of your teeming shore." That's New York's uplifting sentiment about immigration etched on the Statue of Liberty. It's quite apt then that the main protagonist in *GTA/IV* is a murdering, slave trading Russian immigrant. They got what they asked for and then some.



NICE to see that Rockstar's love of crazy, subversive ads hasn't diminished over the last three years. According to this screenshot, the search for America's next top hooker is well underway, and 'Sprunk' is as delicious as ever. It's plain to see here just how far the *GTA* environments have evolved from last gen: the scale and detail of the city environment is jaw-dropping.



BRIDGES in Liberty City: are they ever *not* under construction? If Liberty City is mirroring New York as tightly as we think, expect at least four or five major bridges in *GTA/IV*. Imagine hurtling at high speed across this one, at the dreaded three star mark, darting in and out of the huge amount of oncoming traffic, with a myriad of psycho cops on your trail. Sounds pretty inspiring to us.



THE Platypus? Man, those crazy cats at Rockstar are always ribbing us. Remember the 'veteran' of the Australian-American war calling the talkshow in *GTAIII* ("I didn't do two tours and take boomerang shrapnel in my head to come back here and have a bunch of hippies deny our history! They even wired kangaroos with explosives!")? They just love our marsupials...



WITH a much darker and grittier main character and our estimates placing the setting within the last five years, it definitely raises the question of whether Rockstar will tackle terrorism in the plot. America's War on Terror has been the biggest topic of the decade and Rockstar's never been one to shy away from controversy. We'll have the answer next month.

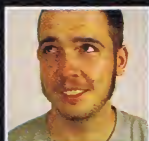


AND finally, here's a close-up of the tough bastard you'll be playing as. We have no name as yet, or any detailed back story regarding the character, but he sounds Russian, or of Eastern European descent, meaning he'll probably be harder than a coffin nail and more ruthless than Jack Bauer on crack. He appears to be older than most *GTA* main characters, hinting at a more serious, darker history to the game. His sombre voiceover ominously states that he's "killed people... smuggled people... sold people". With a measured amount of regret in his voice, he promises himself that "here... things are going to be different..."



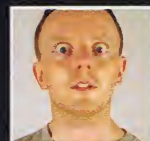
NAZ RECKONS:

The OPS team watching the trailer sounded uncannily like a gang of bikers getting it on with school girls. A steady stream of swearing about the impossibility of it all was constantly punctuated by girly-like squeals of joy. Seeing the best videogame series in history married with the most cutting-edge next gen visuals on the planet was more than enough to make us cry. You had us at *GTA/IV*... tear.



LUKE RECKONS:

When I woke up this morning I was tired, hungry, hungover and couldn't hear anything (all courtesy of a Dropkick Murphys concert the previous night). Did that stop me from springing out of bed, skipping breakfast and coming into work two hours early for the first glimpse of *GTA/IV*? The hell it did! The result? I'm still tingling – so I'm either extraordinarily excited... or about to have a stroke.



MARK RECKONS:

Wowzers in my trousers! I expected that Rockstar would pull something special out the bag, but I didn't expect my pants to explode. The detail, the character models, the humungous landmarks, the environments... the sheer scale of the game is off the charts – I just can't wait to ride that insane rollercoaster. Looks set to be an enormous leap forward from previous *GTAs*. Incredible.

WORDS: LUKE REILLY

NEW DOG, OLD TRICKS

Film, as a medium, has been around for more than a century. Games, on the other hand, have been around for a quarter of that time, and it's only in the past decade or so that they've been able to come close to emulating the cinematic nature of their silver screen forbears. Games have come a long, long way since they first appeared on the scene but while many provide first-rate thrills and top-drawer production values, they still have much to learn from the film industry. Here are a few...



■ Towed along on his crotch?
No wonder they call him Junior

■ "Jason Statham can do
WHAT?!" said the unemployed
Jean-Claude Van Damme

■ "Mine!"

► Great Escapes

Think of as many breathtaking escape sequences as you can in the movies. There are stacks of them, aren't there? Now think of as many as you can in videogames. Not too many, huh? Aside from that level that had you on the run from an Agent in *Enter the Matrix* (which was a decent stab, actually) we can't think of any that come anywhere near the intensity of Hollywood's greatest escapes. Imagine a game that boasted the fluidity of the free running chase between James Bond and his prey (played by French parkour legend Sebastien Foucan) in *Casino Royale*, the slippery ingenuity of Bourne's cunning evasion in *The Bourne Supremacy* or the Fresh Prince's admirable hotel escape in *Enemy of the State*? Who doesn't want silky smooth, heart-in-mouth, frantic footraces through bustling hotels, subways, packed streets and construction sites? Nobody, that's who. Can the likes of *Assassin's Creed* pull this off? Fingers crossed.

◀ Creative Carjacking

We've been jacking cars in games for years, but it's only recently developers have begun to be a little more creative with commandeering. *Pursuit Force* allowed you to leap from one moving vehicle to another and *Just Cause* allowed you to parachute onto cars, land on the roof and hop in via the side window. We can take it further though, right? How about when UK hardcase Jason Statham climbed up from underneath a semi-trailer, sprinted toward the cabin, dived, spun and swung in through the windshield during *The Transporter*? Or who could forget Marv hitching a ride in *Sin City* by running at an oncoming police car, sliding feet first across the bonnet and smashing the windshield? Of course, it would be remiss of us not to mention *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, which features the most rollicking truck hijack of all. We don't always want to stand in front of traffic and have it grind to a halt – we want to change cars on the fly, and we want to do it in style.

► Spoofed

Why do games need to take themselves so seriously all the time? Sure you'll chuckle throughout *San Andreas* and giggle at *Scarface*, and *Psychonauts* and *Rayman Raving Rabbids* were pretty funny (the latter even more so depending on your ACID intake), but there are way too many straight-laced, stuffed-shirt, humourless games doing the rounds. When's the last time you laughed at a game as hard as you laughed at your favourite comedy? Never (stop lying). So how about a *Loaded Weapon 1*-style game that spoofed games and gaming clichés within its own standalone adventure? Better yet, how about a *Last Action Hero*-type experience that placed you in a world of games and famous game characters? A world you could exploit because you understood videogame rules and conventions. Sure, it would require cooperation that far outstrips the Warner Bros./Disney handholding exercise that was *Who Framed Roger Rabbit?* but it's possible, right? Of course not, forget we even mentioned this one.

■ "Her father is HUGE! I'm a dead man..."

■ Parkour. It's french - like 'dressing', 'mustard' and, er... 'fries'

■ "Man, these boxers are LOOSE. I hope nobody can see my fresh prince..."

■ "Shut up! Mullets ARE awesome!"

■ Smoking fat Cubans: A lot less dubious than it sounds

■ "Left at Albuquerque?"

▼ World War Too?

WWII shooters. They've been around since *Wolfenstein* and they're not going anywhere soon. However, even the most robust house needs a new lick of paint every now and then. Standard WWII shooters have been done to death, so what's needed is a fresh tack. Alternate future shooters are one such approach (the upcoming *Turning Point* and, to a slightly lesser extent, *Resistance*) but the film industry is still way out ahead. Developers need to think outside the box. Take *The Eagle Has Landed*, for instance, which is about a German mission to assassinate Churchill. WWII from the OTHER side? That's just crazy enough to work! Or what about *Kelly's Heroes*, an action-comedy all about a behind-the-lines gold heist in the middle of the war. A funny WWII adventure? That's just cuckoo! And who could forget *Where Eagles Dare*, Quentin Tarantino's favourite flick, an old-fashioned action extravaganza about spies penetrating an SS-held castle? Do we ALWAYS have to be regular soldiers these days? Where have all the spies gone?

■ "Who threw that?! I'll turn this bus around!"

■ "This isn't gold. It's chocolate. Jesus Fritz, is this all your Jerries think about?"
"But... we come from the land of chocolate!"

■ "Hi, I'm Michael Caine, the most English man in England"

► Know Your Enemy

Smart. Intelligent. Ruthless. Unpredictable. That's the kind of enemies we've been gagging for in our games. Developers have been getting it half-right every now and then, but Hollywood is still streets ahead. Think of an enemy tenacious enough to claw their way onto your moving car, *I, Robot* style, which you had to shake off with some aggressive driving and some well placed shots. Or how about a *Hellboy*-esque opponent who is reborn two-fold each time you kill it? You'd need to think of a way around that, wouldn't you? What about an enemy SO numerous that you're literally outnumbered by the THOUSANDS and your only option is retreat, a la *Starship Troopers*? Come on developers; show us what you've got!



■ "I think we're gonna need a bigger car of Mortein..."



■ Contrary to what most naysayers may have thought, Sarah Jessica Parker did find work after *Sex and the City*



■ "No, no, no - not Maccas. Why? Because they f*** you with the drive-thru!"



■ "You ever shot a man in the face?" "Err..."

► Perfect Pair

While we're on the topic, why limit two-player shenanigans to buddy cop games? IO's upcoming *Kane and Lynch* and EA's *Army of Two* aside, how many games are making a decent stab at a delivery a duo on the WRONG side of the law? Imagine you and a mate taking it to the mob like Connor and Murphy in *The Boondock Saints*, or teaming up with a friend on the run from every hired gun in the country like *Mr. and Mrs. Smith*. Perhaps even Bruce and Billy-Bob from *Bandits* could get a look in - rolling banks and staying one step ahead from the fuzz would make for a great game. Co-op really needs to stop being looked at as a tacked-on addition to an otherwise solitary game. More developers need to start creating games that feature stories and objectives custom-designed for two players to tackle.

▲ Best Buds

Buddy cop movies. They're practically their own genre. *Lethal Weapon*, *Die Hard with a Vengeance*, *Tango & Cash*, *Hot Fuzz*, *Bad Boys*, *Red Heat* - the list goes on and on. Teamwork - that's what it's always about. How many buddy cop games are there? None worth mentioning. But now that Murtaugh and Riggs literally are too old for this shit why not bring them, or any other crime-fighting duo for that matter, into the videogame world? With online finally hitting its stride and split-screen always an option there's no reason we couldn't be playing co-op cops and busting chops. Playing out all of our cop movie fantasies in a sprawling open world and bringing a partner along for the ride? We'd buy that for a dollar!

■ "Angie? Baby? I don't think this is the adoption agency. And why do I have a submachine gun?"



■ Two Irishmen walk into a bar...

YOU'RE FIRED

If there's one thing games generally aren't short on it's sweet finishing moves, but the all-time crown still belongs to the Governorator. Hooking your arch nemesis to a sidewinder and firing him through the building you just pummelled into a chopper containing his last few cronies? Now that's just BRILLIANT! Games, catch up!





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PLAYSTATION 3

ANYTHING ELSE?

Everything else that we initially came up with but then thought better of.



▲ We'd like to be able to kidnap a celebrity. We're not sure why.



▲ We'd like to shake hands like this, and not just in videogames. We think everyone should shake hands like this. We're don't really know we were going to go with this one.



▲ We want to roll a casino in the vein of *Ocean's Eleven*. We also want to bag as many women as George Clooney does.



▲ High fives. Have YOU ever seen one in a videogame? EVERY movie in the '80s ended with a high five (and a song by Foreigner or Survivor).



▲ We want to do this. We also want orange beards.



▲ Dual fisted shotguns. Why is this so rare in games when it looks so freakin' cool? Come on, we can reload them with our ARMPITS!



▲ We want to hang upside and shoot people. Is that too much to ask? We've never done that before.

► Cut to the chase

Car chases – everyone's been getting in on them. Videogames have been having a good bosh at this since the original *Grand Theft Auto* and *Driver*, the former looking more like the view from a police chopper and the latter coming achingly close to the real thing. There have been plenty of contenders since, but have any of them trumped their celluloid sibling? No. Not really. The chases of *Bullitt* and *Ronin* pull ahead of their digital counterparts by virtue of their sheer intensity, and unique chases like *True Lies*' horse versus motorcycle are nowhere to be seen in games. Don't you think it would be incredible to screech through a hotel on a bike, leaping from building to building when you reach the top? Or how much fun would it be to chase your quarry down through a bustling lobby and kitchen on a freakin' horse? Can SOMEbody get ON this? Cheers.

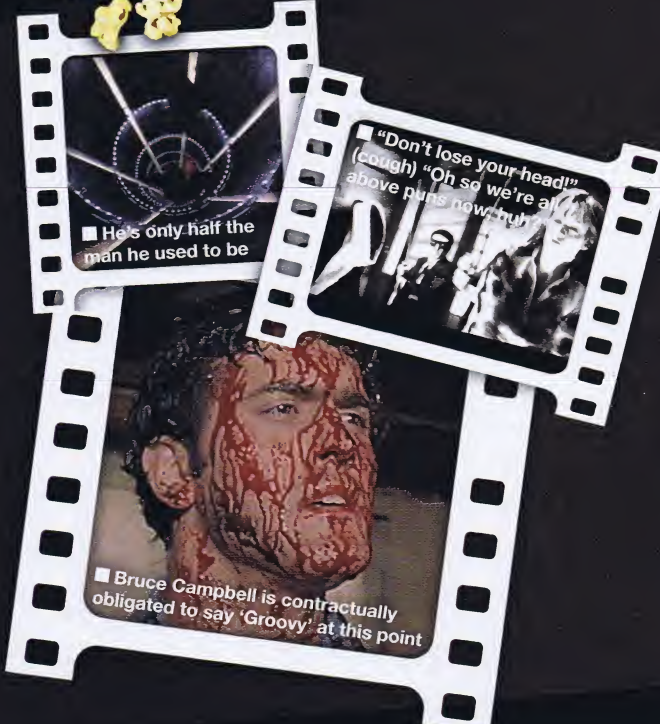


◄ Total Destruction

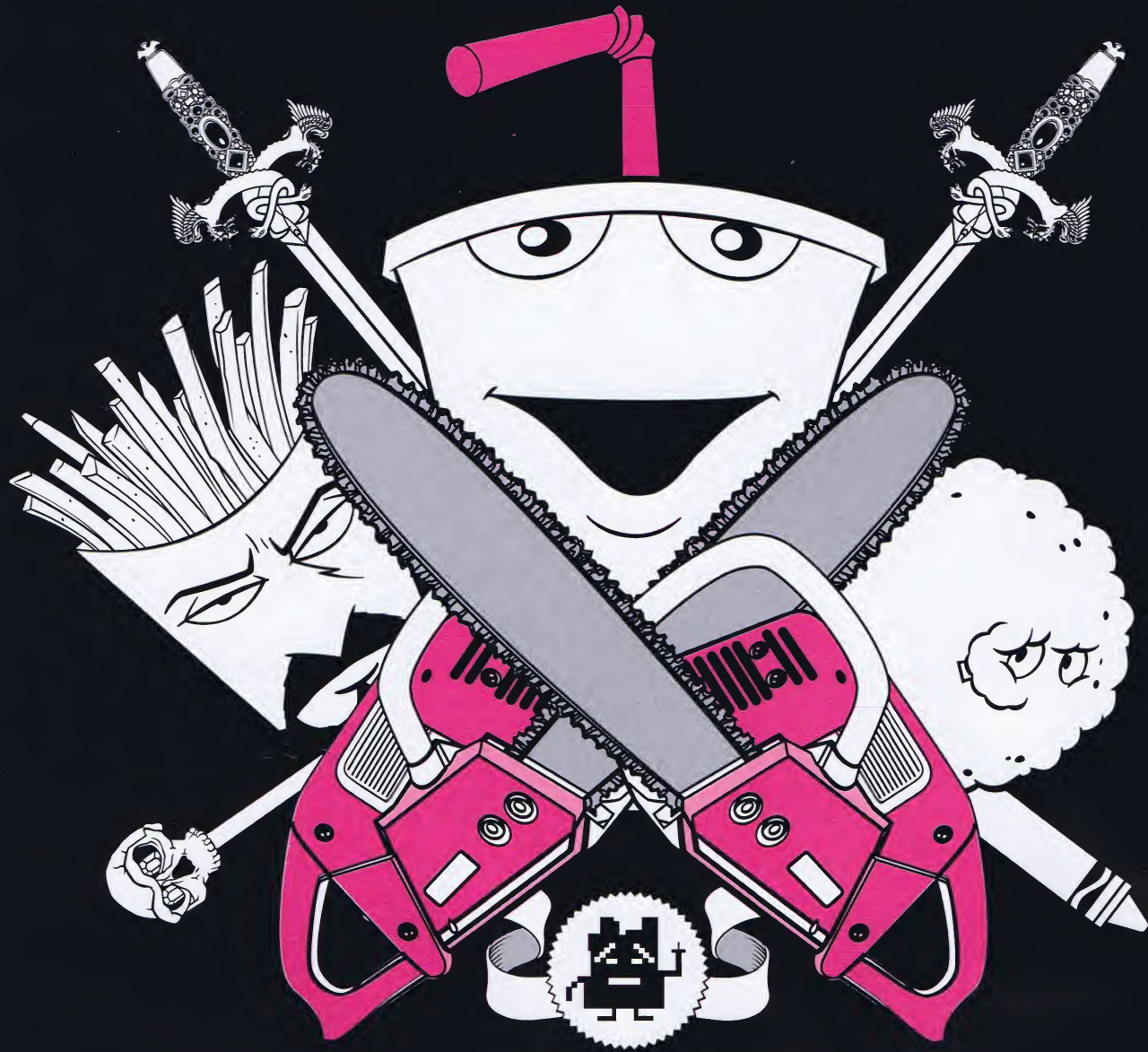
If there's one arena where cinema comes out on top every time it's carnage. Games have been getting better and better (it only takes a cursory glance at *Black* to see that) but they're still lagging behind. Is this the generation developers will have the processing power on tap to let us raze entire city blocks when and how, we wish? Is it finally time for us to shred an entire building floor with the cannon of a Harrier jump jet, a la *True Lies*? Can we now wreak havoc on a city street, bringing down everything in our path with an out-of-control crane arm, *Terminator 3* style? Can we expect to be able to plough through walls in tanks, just like *GoldenEye*? LucasArt's Digital Molecular Matter (a system that applies real-world properties to breakable in-game material) could, in theory, be used for destruction of this level. Chop chop people.

► Making the Cut

Swords. They're a staple in the videogame world. How is it then that few developers are getting it right? Aside from the odd exception, videogame swords are generally about as effective at slicing and dicing as a wet newspaper is. Have you ever cut someone IN TWAIN with a lightsabre in a *Star Wars* game? No. If you can chop a horned freak in half during that sugarcoated piece of PG puff *The Phantom Menace*, surely being overly concerned about excessive violence is a trifle unnecessary? Or what of the likes of *Kill Bill*? Tarantino's slash 'em up puts samurai games to shame. Heads, legs, torsos, arms – nothing is safe from Uma's bloodlust. Meanwhile, pop Genji in your PS3 and we'll be damned if you can lop off a single appendage. How about putting the SIXAXIS controller to use by letting us swing a few swords and lightsabres around? Plus, the SIXAXIS pad would be perfect for a two handed weapon, like a chainsaw. We're thinking *Evil Dead* already. Come get some!



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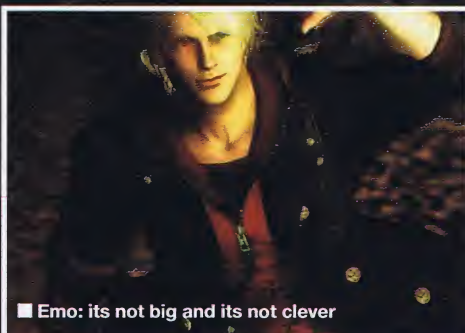
THE DEVIL'S



Devil May Cry has always flown in the face of expectation. Fans fiending for a new version of *Resident Evil* gave a resounding 'what the hell is this?' to the original *DMC* when the franchise was first announced, and now as Capcom prepares to release a new iteration of *DMC*, with a new main protagonist, you would be forgiven for feeling just a slight bit of trepidation. Questions are being asked. Who the hell is Nero? Where the hell is Dante? Why isn't there a brown stain in my pants? But we urge you to shake that doubt from your system boyo; has Capcom ever let you down? Okay, well maybe it has, just a couple of times, but it won't pull any crap with *Devil May Cry 4*, and you can take that to the bank. Stick with this one chaps, it has a few tricks up

OWN

Words: Mark Serrels



■ Emo: its not big and its not clever

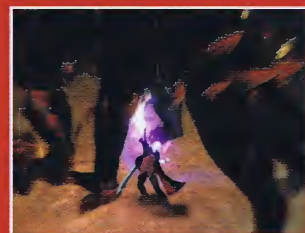
Berial Burial

As we said before, Berial is tough as old boots, and chances are he'll eat you for breakfast faster than you can say 'pop-tart'. Here is our screen by screen of how to take care of that bad boy.



He's on fire...

To begin with Berial is quite literally on fire, and ready to beat the crap out of you. Try and get him from long range and wear him down until...



Who's your daddy...

Now we've got rid of that stupid fire we can lay the Devil Bringer on his candy ass. Fire out that huge hand and slam him down to the kerb like the dog/demonic bull he is.



What have I done?

Man, now he's pissed. Best to just shoot him in the face, or run away like a little pussy. One of the two... yeah we've got nothing.



■ "Everybody FREEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEZE..."

its sleeve that will blow your socks off.

'Ice' to meet you

We had the chance to play an extended version of *Devil May Cry 4*, and make no mistake, we liked what we saw – a lot. In opposition to the previous demo, which was set in the kind of environments you would expect, we were surprised to see that snow, and frostiness in general, played a huge part in the latest section. One particular stage took place on a superbly rendered snowy mountain, complete with epic-sized environments and an impossibly-huge gothic castle, hinting ominously of the gaming experience to come. Despite the fact that some of the textures were possibly placeholder, it was hard not to be amazed

by the actual scale and size of the whole scene. You won't, of course, have too much time to gaze all slack-jawed at the awesome environments. This is no time to take tasteful snaps for the folks back home, this is *Devil May Cry* after all; we expect the sort of delightful action-based gaming that would engage an autistic four year-old and we want it now, before we start seriously dribbling.

This action came in spades with the appearance of a new enemy, a character that the *Devil May Cry* producers were particularly excited about, and with good reason. These icy evil doers, the somewhat dodgily named 'Frost', are a new addition to the franchise and look cooler than the other side of the pillow, both literally and figuratively. With the ability to create ice-barriers, and generally

just kick your lily, pasty ass with their sheer coolness, these 'Frost' (what is the plural of Frost anyway?) look set to be formidable enemies, and they look pretty good to boot.

Attacking in pairs, the best way to dispose of the 'Frost' is to utilise evasive manoeuvres, avoiding their attacks before taking them down to china town with a thumping great big thwack from Nero's sword, the Red Queen. Shattering the barriers they create to protect themselves is particularly satisfying, creating a deliciously icy explosion, scattering shards everywhere, and despite the fact that defeating these frosty chaps isn't too taxing, its still worthwhile, giving you a chance to work out the kinks in one of *Devil May Cry's* latest additions... the 'Devil Bringer'.

The Hand of God

Taking *Devil May Cry 4's* fighting system to new, dizzy heights is the Devil Bringer. A multi-function weapon that literally adds a new dimension to combat, this curious new 'weapon' is hard to describe: basically it's... um... your hand. Nero's 'hand' has the power to extend radically, grabbing then dragging enemies towards you before allowing you to beat the holy hell out of them.

Saying this new gadget is awesome is a bit like saying Angelina Jolie is 'all right looking but has weird lips'. Imagine launching yourself into the air, stretching out your Devil Bringer, snatching up some poor cretin, dragging him kicking and screaming into the sky, then swording the

little bastard whilst still in mid-air. If you haven't just exploded in your pants, then you're probably... um... normal – we just get a little over excited about these things. But the Devil Bringer is really cool, trust us!

Working somewhat like an organic hook shot, the Devil Bringer's uses are numerous and belligerent. Not only can you drag enemies to your position, you can also use the Devil Bringer to pound bad guys into the ground in a move called the 'Buster'. The Buster is pretty simple to use, just press **○** within the correct distance and it's on like King Kong. The move was described to us as a 'devastating throw', but even that doesn't really do it justice. The speed and impact of the move is simply huge, and the blur effects that go with it just put a huge exclamation mark on the whole shebang.

Using the Devil Bringer is pretty simple and accessible. To grab something, there has to be an eerie blue light circling the object you want to grab. This might seem a little restricting, but as soon as you see that light, it's party time. This 'weapon',

however, is not simply used for fighting, it's also used to help Nero get around a little quicker. If there is an object you can hang on to, then you are able to use the Devil Bringer to drag yourself to that location, and in addition, any stray items such as the orbs we are accustomed to seeing in the *Devil May Cry* franchise, can be grabbed to your location. Overall the Devil Bringer is a pretty useful gadget, and one that takes close range fighting to two levels. We can't wait to see the crazy combos we can rack up, snatching up dudes left, right and centre, sending them hurtling to their unholy doom.

I'm the firestarter

Completely juxtaposed against the previous harsh, desolate snow level, the next section we saw turned out to be a claustrophobic heaving mass of fire and flames in the form of the boss 'Berial'. Emerging through what appears to be a portal from the depths of hell, Berial comes out swinging, a bit pissed off since he

has apparently spent the last couple of thousand years stuck in his hellish prison.

Berial is pretty much your standard enormous demon, a huge, angry, fire-spewing monstrosity hell-bent on tearing you limb from limb. Looking much like a char-grilled bull (but sadly not in delicious steak form), Berial can chase you on all fours, or on his hind legs wielding what can only be described as a huge blunt instrument used to pummel and maim. Defeating Berial is quite tricky indeed; basically, he's harder than a coffin nail, and unless you come at him with a decent gameplan you're quite literally toast.

We found that taking Berial on was manageable until he had about 10% remaining on his life gauge, then things got slightly tougher. Attacking him with the usual variety of attacks was workable, but a spectacular method was to use the Devil Bringer in order to unceremoniously slam him to the deck. It's a testament to the strength of the Devil Bringer (and the

general coolness of the game) that this weapon could be used against such a huge enemy. The best way to defeat Berial was to use this attack after beating him down with more long distance shooting. When he gets all bestial, however, charging around on all fours, it's best to stay out of his way. The level of difficulty shown in this boss battle is a gesture that should help silence the murmurs that *Devil May Cry 4* may be too easy for veterans of the series. Berial was certainly no pushover, and made for an extremely exhilarating boss fight to say the least.

The Return of Dante

Alright, alright don't get your panties in a twist, we're getting to Dante, and yes you can relax, he *is* in the game and fully playable. We're still unsure whether or not the sections we played with Dante will actually be



God Save the Queen

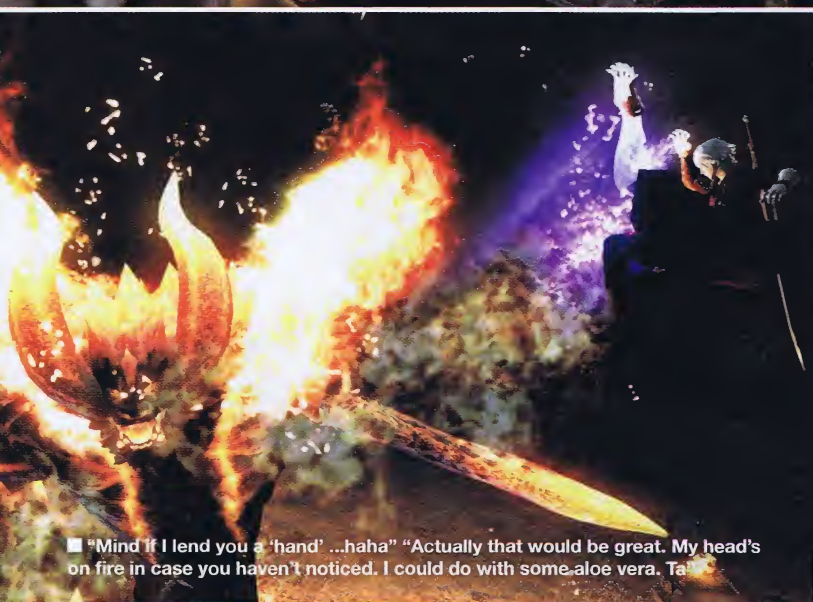
We knew that Nero's sword was called the 'Red Queen', but until now we really had no idea why. Now we know. By pressing the **LB** button players can fill up the 'exceed gauge' which is split up into three bars, and if you manage to charge these three bars up the true nature of the Red Queen will be revealed. As soon as the bars are all filled the sword starts glowing red, a sign that you are now able to perform the most powerful attack in Nero's arsenal. Nero then holds the sword almost like the throttle on a motorbike, and then proceeds to kick all kinds of crap out of the bad guys. Awesome.



■ To be perfectly honest, we have no idea what's going on here. Looks thoroughly 'moody' though...



■ "Mr Fire... meet Mr Ice... the outcome? Elementary..."
Dante sucked at 'tough guy' catchphrases.



■ "Mind if I lend you a 'hand' ...haha" "Actually that would be great. My head's on fire in case you haven't noticed. I could do with some aloe vera. Ta"

playable with the same character in the final game (it's possible that Capcom might pull a slick switcheroo on us in the retail version a la *Metal Gear Solid 2*) but you will be playing as the old silver fox at at least one point in *Devil May Cry 4*.

Best of all, since Nero has his Devil Bringer, playing as Dante is a completely different gaming experience, creating a whole new dimension to *Devil May Cry 4*. And in a move that will make fanboys weep tears of emo joy, Dante plays and looks very similarly to his original *Devil May Cry* incarnation. There are, of course, some updates; all Dante's moves have been freshened up a little and look a whole lot cooler in general. More importantly Dante can now switch between gun and sword styles mid-action with a simple press of the D-pad, which will no doubt result in some funk-tacular gun/sword combo action. Capcom has also been hinting at a Nero/Dante confrontation, with some snazzy

artwork that has them clashing swords in a completely non-homosexual way. It's quite possible that both characters could perhaps 'get it on' in the physical 'fighting' sense at some point in *Devil May Cry 4*.

As of now Capcom has stated that *DMC4* will run at a respectable 720p upon release. Now that may frustrate those who were hoping for some 1080p action, but considering that the producers have the game running at a stunning 60fps, we're willing to make the sacrifice. The nature of the *DMC*'s gameplay lends itself to a slicker frame-rate as opposed to high res, so we guess this balance is probably the best decision for the franchise all round.

Generally we are excited about the whole game. With a slick, free-flowing fighting system that seems ripe for some ridiculous combo-ness, we can wait to get involved in some hi-def combo demon slaying. By taking the traditional *Devil May Cry* action we are accustomed to and tweaking it thoroughly for the next gen, Capcom is undoubtedly in the throes of creating something very special indeed. ▀

SPEAK OF THE DEVIL

We had the chance to have a little chinwag with *DMC4* super producers Hiroyuki Kobayashi and Hideaki Itsuno. They had quite a bit to say about their latest masterpiece...

Many people think that *Devil May Cry 4* is just a beautiful *DMC*. Is there anything beyond the high quality of its graphics which will define this game in terms of serious improvements?

Hiroyuki Kobayashi: I perfectly understand this view. But to be honest, it is very hard to understand how the game has evolved by just looking at screenshots. Videos start to give you another idea about what *DMC* has become with this fourth version. You should already be able to notice the new actions we are incorporating to enhance the gameplay experience.

Hideaki Itsuno: There are already a few *DMC4* videos on the web, but even with them, it is still hard to really realise what the game stands for. To start with, I think we need to watch *DMC4* in true HD and at 60fps. For sure, you may say that the same experience can be achieved on Xbox 360, but not as the PS3 can do it.

HK: To me, Nero's Devil Bringer is one of the key elements of this new *DMC* title, but one must remember to also remain true to certain features that make it a *DMC* title. In *DMC4*, the hero is new but in many ways is reminiscent of Dante, if you start to change things too greatly, including the hero's appearance, then people will start to point at the fact this is not *DMC* anymore and would suggest we create a new title, a new series.

HK: I think that a sequence like the one in which you face the Frosts is a very new experience for the series.

HI: We won't be making changes that do not fit or seem unnatural to the *DMC* series.

Is it possible for players used to the *DMC* experience to play like they did on a previous version and clear *DMC4* that way?

HI: A good question.

HK: I think that can be done.

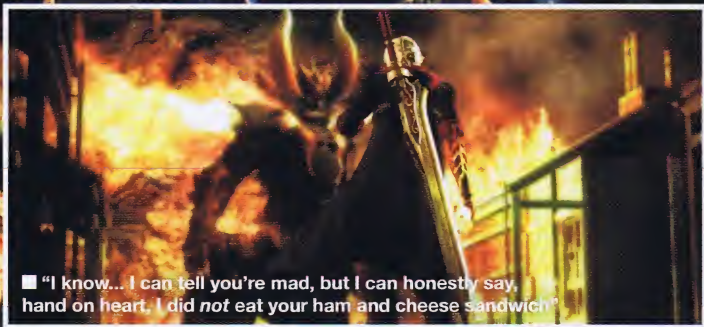
HI: Maybe people familiar with *DMC3*. We are giving players lots of possibilities in terms of game play in *DMC4*.

HK: Veteran players of *DMC* and *DMC3* should not find it a problem. However, I think that players who only experienced *DMC2* would find it more difficult as that game was designed with a much lower level of difficulty or technicality in terms of gameplay.

HI: We want to reward players who accept the challenge *DMC4* offers so they feel great about what they have just accomplished or cleared. So we made this *DMC* accessible from the beginning for those players who keep persevering. It is not at all an impossible challenge; it is like stairs, one step at a time, higher and higher.

The new demo features lots of commands which are taught on screen. Aren't they just too numerous, with the risk of making the game experience a bit tricky?

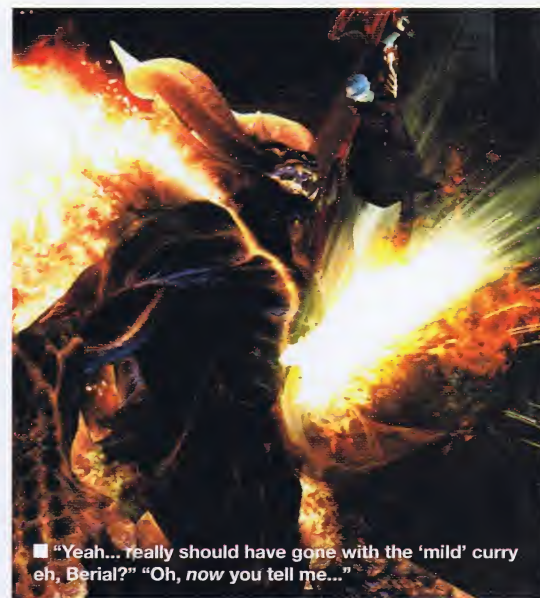
HI: There is a big difference between *DMC* and other games which are offering such a large number of actions. Indeed too many commands make games a very difficult



■ "I know... I can tell you're mad, but I can honestly say, hand on heart, I did *not* eat your ham and cheese sandwich"



■ The Armageddon: didn't really go as Jesus planned...



■ "Yeah... really should have gone with the 'mild' curry eh, Berial?" "Oh, *now* you tell me..."

experience. Take *Street Fighter II*, there were no less than six buttons to use. Many thought just looking at the panel of the cabinet with all these buttons, "Oh my God, this is no game for me!" But these six buttons are all attack buttons and the game was designed to let people master them and build their combos. But at the same time, the game allows people to play using only the buttons they wanted. This is the same philosophy behind *DMC4*, we are giving players a large number of possibilities but they are free to enjoy their game as they want to. Should they want to use only the gun, well, they can do so but hopefully they will want to try other possibilities or combinations if you will and so in the end develop their own play style.

Do you think that *DMC4* as a game experience can only be fully comprehended after clearing it several times?

HI: We designed the game so players would learn each technique at key moments. For example, there is an entire part of the game focused on the new hero. I mean Nero.

HK: It is a way to teach newcomers to the *DMC* series many things about the franchise – why Dante is no longer the main hero and why Nero has taken his place, etc...

HK: This allows us to introduce new mechanisms into the gameplay experience.

HI: It also allows gamers new to the series to access the world of *DMC*.

Backgrounds look very amazing. But, throughout the game, is there

more interaction with them?

HK: It is usual in the West to include lots of interaction, mainly using physics, but *DMC4* is not about that. We can't go into specifics yet, but there will be some form of interaction. However, again, it will not be done the same way as Western titles.

HI: *DMC* is not about physics. Plus you have to consider that we started on this project at a time we knew nothing about the platform. So if we had included such physics based interaction, we could have ended with the game not running properly on the final version of the PS3.

HK: We did not really try to deliver something totally new. Our main objective is to make the confrontation between the player and the enemies more enjoyable.

When it will be completed, do you think that *DMC4* will make 100% use of the PS3 power as we know it or is there still some room left?

HI: I don't think we will be utilising all the console's potential, but we won't be far from it.

HK: There is certainly still more for us to use and we will be doing so over the next few months. But I'm confident by the time the game is released, *DMC4*'s technical achievements on the platform will be well respected.

How much of the game has been completed at this stage?

HK: I'd say half of it.

HI: I'm not that sure!

HK: I guess the demo indicates that the game's development is quite advanced and certainly what it contains is pretty complete, but there are plenty of other elements we are still to unveil and they will require a lot of work. ♪

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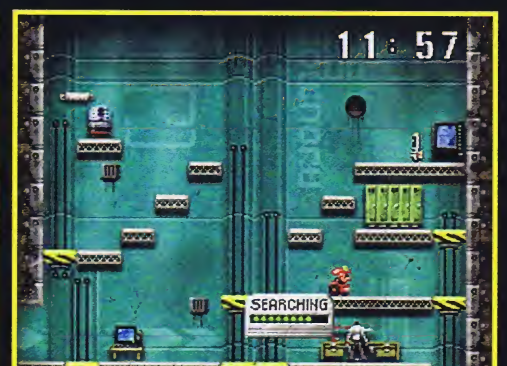
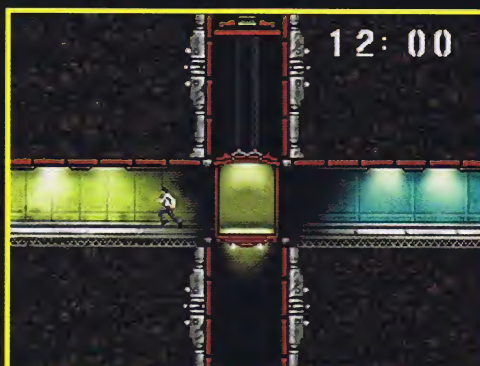
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PG
Mid violence

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THIS MONTH'S RELEASES PUT TO THE TEST

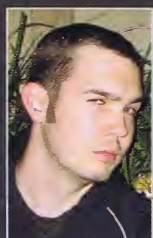
REVIEWS

PlayStation®
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**GAME
OF THE
MONTH**

WHY IT'S GAME OF THE MONTH

1. Improves on the already awesome *Spidey 2*
2. Packs in a massive 20-plus hour story
3. It combines superheroes and GTA
4. Who doesn't love swinging?
5. It's got Bruce Campbell in it!



WELCOME

The two best games this month and I miss out entirely. Was I in the toilet or something? Naz has been impossible to pry off *Spider-Man 3*, and Anthony has been hammering *God of War II* so hard he gave up sleeping. No kidding. Dude has not actually gone to bed. He's running on coke and black jellybeans. Plus I think he's still wearing the same pants as he was last week. How do I bring that up?

LUKE REILLY
Reviews Editor

REVIEW RATINGS

Here's what our review scores stand for:

- 10/10** High on revolutionary. A game that could change the face of gaming forever
- 09/10** A truly astonishing game. Essential fare
- 08/10** Highly recommended
- 07/10** Good, solid fare that's well worth a look
- 06/10** Better than average, and acceptable for hardcore fans of the genre
- 05/10** An average game, probably not a lot to recommend here
- 04/10** Poor, but still with the odd moment
- 03/10** Extremely disappointing
- 02/10** To be avoided
- 01/10** Beer coaster

THE OPS2 AWARDS

We don't hand out high scores for nothing, so when you see one of these, you'll know it's a sign of quality. Look for them on game boxes.



The Gold Award is a rare gem and only to be given to games that score that magic 10/10. This score indicates gaming of simply incredible quality!



The Silver Award is for games that receive 9/10. If you see this, it's a sign of star quality, indicating that you should buy this game now!

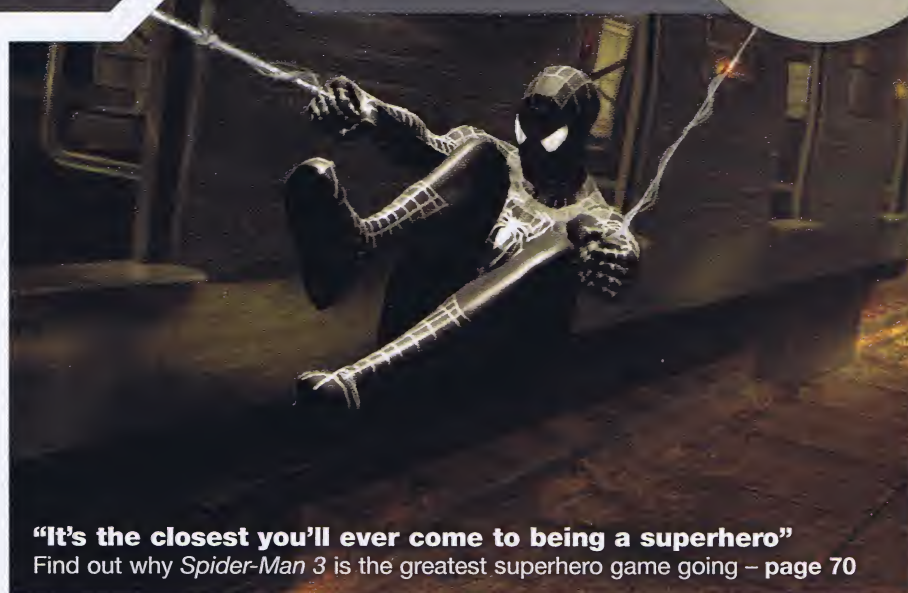


The Bronze Award is for games that score 8/10. These games are highly recommended and are 100% guaranteed to satisfy.

OPS REVIEW SETUP



We choose to review our games on a super-slick Full HD 1080p 40" Bravia X-series for the best picture possible. This sucker melts eyeballs...



"It's the closest you'll ever come to being a superhero"

Find out why *Spider-Man 3* is the greatest superhero game going – page 70

PS3



TOM CLANCY'S SPLINTER CELL DOUBLE AGENT

Sam finally sneaks onto the PS3. What's the verdict? – page 74

PS2



GOD OF WAR II

Read why Kratos' latest is the PS2's greatest! – page 82

PSP



CALL OF DUTY: ROADS TO VICTORY

On the road again with the WWII veteran – page 90

Def Jam: Icon

p.78

GTA: Vice City Stories

p.86

Burnout Dominator

p.88

300: March to Glory

p.91

Sid Meier's Pirates!

p.92

Asphalt Urban GT 2

p.94

■ **GENRE:** ADVENTURE
■ **RELEASE:** MAY 2007
■ **DEVELOPER:** TREYARCH
■ **DISTRIBUTOR:** ACTIVISION

■ **PLAYERS:** 1
■ **PRICE:** \$119.95
■ **HD:** TBC
■ **WEB:** www.treyarch.com

■ **BACK STORY:** After an entertaining but very shallow debut, the series matured with a fully-interactive New York City map in *Spider-Man 2*. Since then Spidey fans also received the amusing spin-off title *Ultimate Spider-Man* in 2005.

SPIDER-MAN 3

Stick with this superhero series

PlayStation.
**SILVER
AWARD**
9/10

We're not sure what it is about low-budget horror movie directors but they sure seem to have a knack for rising from obscurity to create huge Hollywood blockbusters. It was with gory splatterfests like *Bad Taste* and *Braindead* that Peter Jackson kicked off his career but he is, of course, much better known for blockbusters like *The Lord of the Rings* and *King Kong*. Similarly, Sam Raimi made his start in the industry with the *Evil Dead* films but was later catapulted into superstardom with his spectacular *Spider-Man* movies.

What's even better news for gamers is that not only do these horror buffs make classic flicks, they also inspire great videogames based on them. The collaboration between Peter Jackson and Ubisoft resulted in one of 2005's best games, *King Kong*. Which brings us neatly to the amazing superhero opus that Sam Raimi and Treyarch have now crafted.

YOUR INNER SUPERHERO

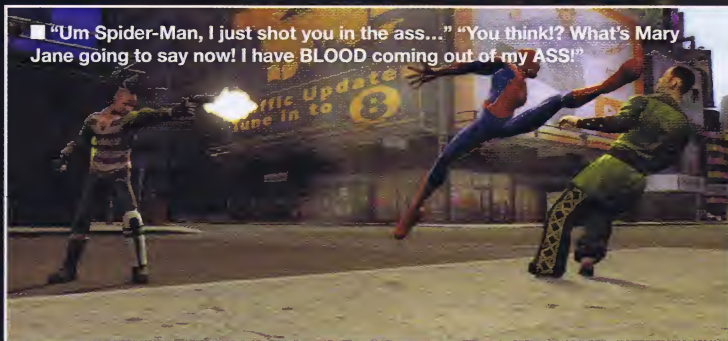
Spider-Man 3 succeeds as a videogame primarily because it does a better job than any other game before of making players feel like fair dinkum underpants on the outside superheroes. If being a superhero wasn't a secret childhood fantasy of yours then you're: a) lying, b) chronically lacking in imagination, or c) you're either Muhammad Ali or Arnold Schwarzenegger. Being able to tap into your superhero fantasy, even if it's just in a videogame, creates one of the coolest digital buzzes you can get.

The 'hero' moments come at a rapid-fire rate in *Spider-Man 3* but there were a few particularly jaw-

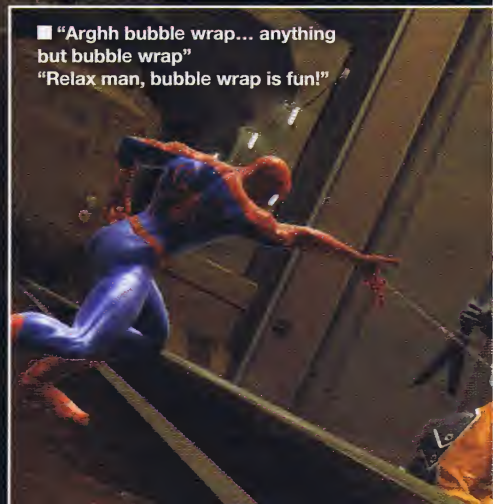
■ Men with ponytails: deserve everything they get



■ "Um Spider-Man, I just shot you in the ass..." "You think!? What's Mary Jane going to say now! I have BLOOD coming out of my ASS!"



■ "Arghh bubble wrap... anything but bubble wrap" "Relax man, bubble wrap is fun!"



dropping classics. One of our favourites came during a rooftop battle with a military chopper. Rather than simply running for cover when it fired missiles at Spidey he's able to pull off a *Matrix*-style dodge at the last instant before the missile hits him, then snag it with a web and fling it back at the chopper.

Other highlights include jumping off and diving between a handful of dangerously colliding cars that have been thrown at Spidey by a pissed off super Scorpion, swinging between skyscrapers to grab a guy who was skydiving without a parachute after his helicopter crashed, and stopping thugs in a getaway car by ripping off its bonnet with web, then punching through its engine block.

DOES WHATEVER A SPIDER CAN

As well as these hero highlights, Treyarch has done a superb job of animating the Spider-Man character so that he swings, jumps and fights just like he does in the movies. Treyarch has clearly worked tirelessly to get his swinging animations looking graceful and natural. Impressively the artists have even had time to work in all of the little secondary animations that really sell the experience, like the way Spidey puts an arm out for balance and runs along the side of a building whenever he swings close enough to it.

Whether he's scaling the side of a building, doing that slightly goofy 'running in mid-air' super jump or his iconic hanging upside-down from a

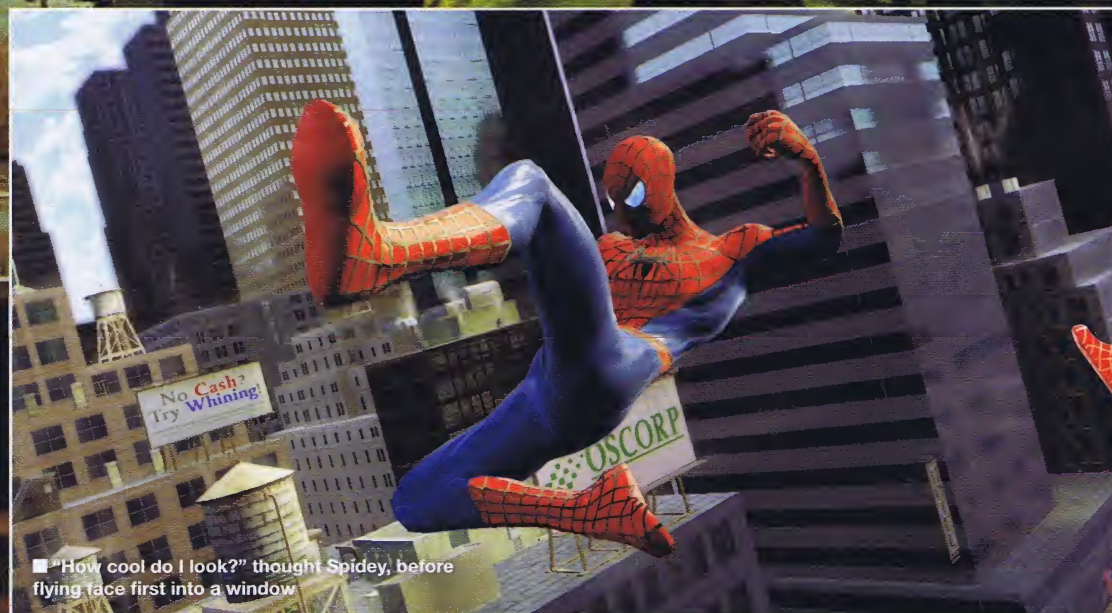
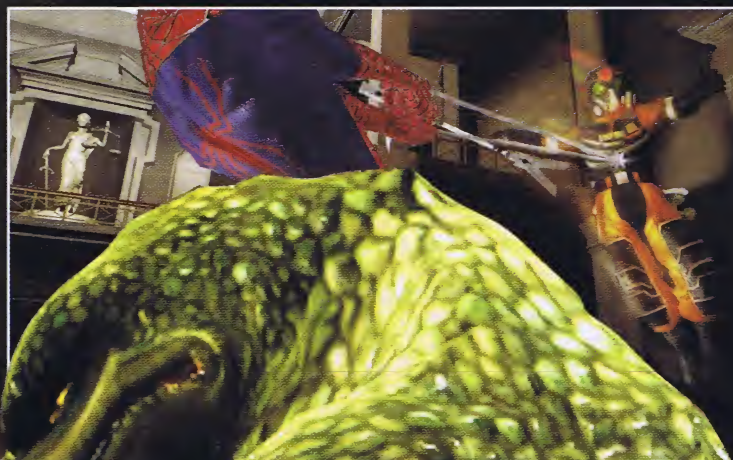
web pose, he always moves in textbook Spidey style.

In the same way that Sam Raimi captured all the speed, strength and acrobatics that we presume a superhero would fight with, Treyarch has done an admirable job recreating superhero combat in a playable form. As Spidey you can snag enemies with web mid-combo, then yank them towards you to add extra momentum to the devastating punch you're about to deliver. It's also possible to kick enemies up into the air, then leap up after them and pummel their unconscious body with a flurry of attacks. The combat has evolved to a point where it now much more closely resembles a choreographed fight scene than the fairly simplistic combat seen in previous *Spider-Man* games.

THE BIG APPLE

Spider-Man 3 is big. So big that it absolutely dwarfs the prequels by comparison. While *Ultimate Spider-Man* could be wrapped up in a paltry six hours, *Spider-Man 3* provides a whopping 20-plus hours of gameplay. What's even more surprising is that even though there's four times as much content as the last game, every minute of it still manages to be more entertaining than even the best levels of *Ultimate Spider-Man*.

Unlike the last three *Spider-Man* games, this time the linear missions have been ditched in favour of a GTA-style



■ "How cool do I look?" thought Spidey, before flying face first into a window

SWINGER

Spider-Man 3's recreation of the Manhattan island is immense so you'll be spending a good amount of time getting from one side of it to the other. Thankfully swinging through the air as Spidey looks amazing and is so much fun to do that you'll be hard pressed to ever tire of it. It's unbelievably cool when you casually pull off tricky moves like angling your momentum just right to swing between two tightly packed skyscrapers with a gap of just a couple of metres between them.





■ "Take THAT! Ow... I just punched your visor thingy... that *really* hurt"



■ "Oh shit, where the hell did my webbing go? This won't end well"



■ Taxi Drivers: deserve everything they get...



■ Men in yellow jump suits: deserve everything they get...



approach with multiple mission-based storylines that can be played through in any order you want. There are, of course, mission threads featuring Sandman, Green Goblin Jr. and Venom that appear to be loosely based on the movie, but the bulk of the missions feature lesser-known Spidey villains like The Scorpion, Kraven The Hunter and The Lizard. In another nod to GTA you'll also be playing through several gang-specific storyline threads.

THE SPIDER'S WEB

The bulk of the activities during missions will be familiar to long-time Spidey fans.

For the most part missions are set indoors and have you beating the piss out of thugs, rescuing civilians and engaging in boss fights.

A handful of new twists have been added into the formula to keep you on your toes however. At set points during missions you'll find yourself playing through interactive cut-scenes. These cut-scenes work much like the ones in *God of War II* where you have to time the correct button prompts on-screen to perform the needed actions. As well as being stylish and well-choreographed these action cut-scenes have also been animated to take

into account any incorrect button presses you make. You can't help but chuckle at Spidey's misfortune during amazing gymnastic feats when he suddenly gets flattened by an enemy or falls to his death because you've gone and tapped the wrong button.

The wall crawler's Spider Sense becomes a playable feature for the first time. However, rather than warning of danger as it's traditionally been used for, engaging the Spider Sense turns the screen black and white and highlights interactive objects of interest. It may not make a lot of sense within the comic



■ "Decision time: KFC or Macca's? I can't choose! They're both so delicious..."



■ "ARRRGH! I've got something in my eye! It could be sand. Yep, it's sand..."



■ "This suit is really tight. How the hell am I going to get out of this bad boy, especially with all the exercise I've been doing? Man I'm sweaty..."

INFO BYTE

Spider-Man 3 even lets you indulge in a bit of photo journalism. After picking up work from *The Daily Bugle* you will have set assignments that you need to complete where the quality of your photos are graded on the fly.

book mythology but it does open up the missions for a lot more puzzle solving elements.

Arguable the biggest change to the gameplay dynamic comes in the form of a new dodge button. Rather than the odd 'Sixth Sense' mentioned above, this dodge move works much more like Spidey's normal Spider Sense. Whenever you tap the dodge button time will slow to a crawl and Spidey will automatically dodge out of the way of attacks and projectiles. After dodging an attack you also get the ability to perform a counter-attack. So, if a thug swings an axe at you, hitting dodge will see Spidey limbo under the blade, then

you can hit the counter-attack button and jump up onto the flat side of the axe and use it as a springboard to leap into the air and come crashing down feet-first onto his no-good noggin.

THE NEW BLACK

You could hardly have a *Spider-Man 3* game without the mysterious black suit coming into play. For those who aren't familiar with the comics, the black suit is a living alien organism that grants whoever wears it super speed and strength. In gameplay terms when you're wearing the black suit your attacks do more damage and you gain access to a handful of considerably more violent moves like tackling enemies to the ground and repeatedly punching them in the head.

There are a couple of issues that stop *Spider-Man 3* from achieving greatness but they're all either minor or inevitable given the nature of the game. The visuals, while stunning and very true to the films when you're swinging over the city, are a little inconsistent. Spider-Man and some

of the super villains are insanely detailed but other characters like Spidey's alter ego Peter Parker look quite dull by PS3 standards. Similarly many buildings that you climb are almost photo-realistic but then other sections like Central Park are blander than low-fat porridge.

The game's camera doesn't always manage to keep up with Spidey either and occasionally flicks jarringly through various perspectives, especially during fights in confined spaces. This can be a little disorientating but given how fast Spidey needs to move we can't imagine how any camera system could always do him justice.

There's a hell of a lot to like about *Spider-Man 3*. Ramping up the combat and visuals, then beefing up the game's depth by incorporating a GTA-style template is hardly the most original strategy for a sequel but it sure is a successful one – especially considering that the number of people who like either GTA or superheroes is... well... everyone. **Narayan Pattison**

THE BRIGHT SIDE

Like the previous games there's a healthy range of side missions to explore in *Spider-Man 3*. However, where they were repetitive and pointless in previous Spider-Man games, there's now a good range of genuinely interesting ones. One of the first things we did in the game was climb to the top of the Empire State Building to see the view, but we also found the option to start one of the game's skydiving challenges. At another point we saw a couple of thugs on a rooftop. After beating them up we took a look through the telescope they were protecting and found it gave us a view of an apartment where a group of terrorists had taken hostages. Overall these new side missions are a Spidey-powered super leap over the quality seen in previous games.



PROS:

- Being a superhero is always fun
- Huge 20-hour storyline

CONS:

- Visuals disappoint now and then
- You're not really Spider-Man

VERDICT: It's the closest you'll ever come to being a superhero. Suit up now.

OFFICIAL SCORE:
09

■ **GENRE:** ACTION
■ **RELEASE:** NOW
■ **DEVELOPER:** UBISOFT
■ **DISTRIBUTOR:** UBISOFT

■ **PLAYERS:** 1-6
■ **PRICE:** \$119.95
■ **HD:** 720p
■ **WEB:** www.ubi.com/au

■ **BACK STORY:** Since the Tom Clancy games started off with the *Rainbow Six* franchise eons ago, we've seen the maturation of the *Ghost Recon* series and the beanstalk rise of *Splinter Cell*. Look for *Rainbow Six Vegas* and *Ghost Recon: Advanced Warfighter 2* on PS3 soon!

TOM CLANCY'S SPLINTER CELL DOUBLE AGENT

Double the fun?

PlayStation
SILVER AWARD
9/10

Splinter Cell Double Agent will make your colon spastically gyrate. We're not talking about the little twitches you get before you make a speech or go out on a hot date. We're talking about major bottom wobbles induced by the physiological response of extreme tension, the sort of dynamite that releases dopamine and rams you into the game world so hard it's as if your rump is really on the cutting board.

With that said, it's time to borrow Granny's incontinence pants. Brandishing photo-like flair along with a buzzing new take on the long-forged *Splinter Cell* gameplay, *Double Agent* blows past conceptions of in-game immersion and signposts the reality that the next generation is no longer next: it's now. It's testament that we no longer need to rely on films to make us linger on the edge of our seats, as *Double Agent* is just as tense as the last act in *Witness* or the espionage in *The Departed*. It's not perfect by any means, but all things considered *Splinter Cell Double Agent* is well worth the asking price.

SEXIER THAN BOND

For a start, running *Double Agent* on a big screen in HD is a license to snap

hydraulics of the ship in Iceland, to the bathrooms in Shanghai, everything mimics real-world detail. Some levels are better than others, but by and large this is one erotic beast.

Still, it's running on next generation hardware so the canvas is expected to be painted sweetly. The real issue is what changes has Ubisoft dared make to a series that reached an all too comfortable harmony with its last installment, *Splinter Cell Chaos Theory*?

NOTHING TO LOSE

Once a pillar of emotional fortitude, Sam Fisher has been shattered after a personal tragedy. His boss, Lambert, then does what any good NSA director would do – he sends him in for the toughest mission of his life. Planted in a state penitentiary as an inmate, Sam's mission is to bust out Jamie Washington, a known member of terrorist group John Brown's Army (JBA), before infiltrating the network and working as a double agent.

This whole double agent angle isn't some half-assed ruse. There are now two distinct types of missions. Field missions are what they sound like and are almost exactly like the missions of previous versions except both the JBA and, secretly, the NSA give Sam objectives. The majority of them aren't mission critical, but

failing to achieve an objective will lead to a deterioration of trust on behalf of the body that assigned you the task. The amount of trust the JBA and NSA have in you is shown on screen in the form of two bars. If either drains completely it's game over and you'll have to replay the mission.

Undercover missions make up the other piece of the pie. Stripped of the ability to attack, you've got to move about JBA headquarters and fulfill sneaky objectives like planting bombs, recording JBA voices and stealing information, all the while completing JBA chores like working on land mines and hacking emails. Unfortunately it's all got to be done before the on-screen timer hits zero. The faster you accomplish your JBA tasks, the more time you can devote to sneaking around the complex getting NSA work done. On top of that, there are a number of areas within the complex that are classified as restricted. Depending on where you are in the game, you can, of course, sneak in like the slimy blaggard that you are to score whatever booty awaits.

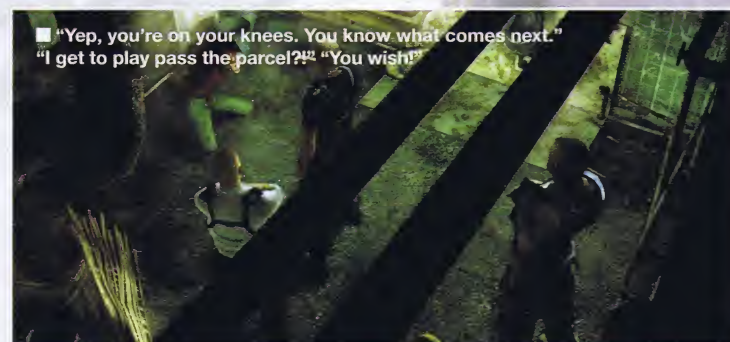


■ [Giggling sound] "No! Tickling armpits is banned! Oh Jeremy, you're such a crackup!"



necks. Sandblasting some of the most complex and detailed environments onto the screen with an array of HD&L-powered reflections, diffractions and paranoid shadows, the visual smack this delivers straight to your eyes will leave your balls tingling for weeks. You won't question it after you check out the ocean effects during the Mexico cruiser mission – trust us.

Unlike racing games, which rush their scenery by you, *Double Agent* features rich rooms and locations that you're able to inspect up close and personal. From the gauge-littered



■ "Yep, you're on your knees. You know what comes next." "I get to play pass the parcel?" "You wish!"



■ Fire: hot, and very burney

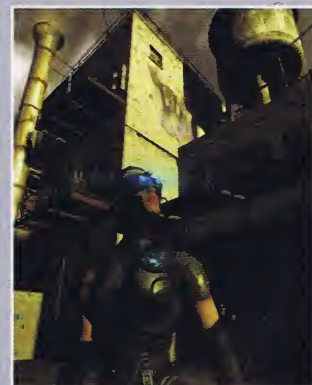


■ "Huh, I meant to get the guy in the red hat. Yep... this is not good..."



NEW STUFF FOR PS3

It's good to know that the PS3 version of *Double Agent* has a few extras over its older Xbox 360 brother. Firstly we get SIXAXIS motion-sensitivity support. While it doesn't feature in the game heavily, it can come into play when picking locks, swimming, or controlling the drone when playing as an Upsilon merc in the multiplayer mode. Also new is the inclusion of a selectable female spy to take into the multiplayer fray!



■ "Man I need the toilet..." "SURPRISE!" "Ah Sam... your timing couldn't have been worse."



■ Sam Fisher: sweaty and bald

“...every bit as tense as the last act in *Witness* or the espionage in *The Departed*.”

All this – the sneaking around while undercover, the field missions with death around every corner, the glorious graphical muscle – just serves to suck you in to the rabbit hole even further. Days after playing it you’ll be making mental notes when you spot surveillance cameras, thinking about hacking keypads, and imaging people in thermal vision along with that ascending “brrrrr” sound that accompanies Sam’s goggles.

COURT MARSHALED

As said, however, it’s not quite perfect. Without question this is the bravest *Splinter Cell* game conceived and it features a tarpaulin of design changes that have and haven’t worked.

After virtually eradicating it in *Chaos Theory*, a lot of trial and error has crept back into *Double Agent*. It might have something to do with the environments and areas being so rich in detail that it’s often hard to distinguish what is a game-critical objective or pathway and what isn’t. In any case you’ll often have to play a section several times before working out “oh, I had to climb that thing” or “hide in this nook”.

Combat is also more cumbersome. While you now have a huge assortment of grenades, mines, and gadgets in your arsenal, quickly swapping between them during a bout of bullet chucking requires far too much cycling back and forth. You might say that’s the game’s way of enticing you to engage the enemy from short range, but that only serves to highlight Sam’s new arthritis. His standard death and knockout blows lag, and the range required to grab folk from behind has

been reduced. All too often you’ll start to make your move on a guard, see the grab icon flash but then have no chance to capitalise. Then the bugger will turn around, spot you, and before Sam can throw off one of his now-sluggish chicken wings he’s Swiss cheese. URGH!!!

It’s hard to say if Ubisoft meant to up the difficulty by instigating these changes, though if that’s the case we wish it had opted to up the complexity by instead offering more alternate routes for tackling each level.

SIX FOR A KILLER PARTY

Splinter Cell multiplayer has arrived on PS3, ready to take advantage of the system’s native online support. For those who’ve never heard of how multiplayer *Splinter Cell* works, you’ve got a team of spies (played like the single-player) against a team of Upsilon grunts (played from the first-person). Each team is allowed a maximum of three players. The spies have to sneak into a level, extract information

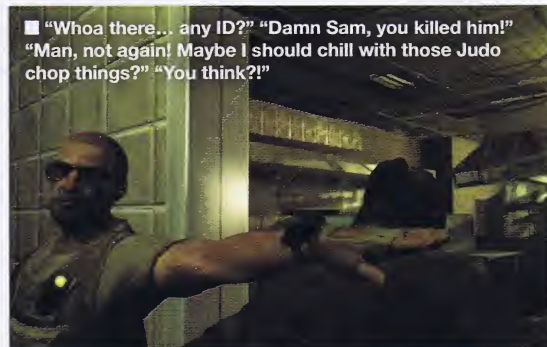
from a number of consoles, then bundy on out of there. All the while the heavily armed Upsilon team is hunting them down like the dogs they are.

While it sounds simple, it’s hard to have a great game online with people you don’t know, partly because success for either team (though for spies in particular) relies on knowing each level like your spouse’s body. That said, if you find people who are at your skill level you’ve hit the jackpot. Hacking a console as a spy and then seeing an Upsilon flashlight burn around a nearby corner will prompt you to punch out obscenities and hide under your bed. Great fun.

The gaming equivalent to a literary page-turner, *Splinter Cell Double Agent* will catapult the blood pressure and drag you, hand over gaping jaw, into the dark for a tense political ride. It’s not all smooth, but with a deep single-player campaign, boast-worthy visuals, and a healthy menu of multiplayer to be had, there’s nothing to stop you signing up. **James Ellis**

PS2 VS PS3

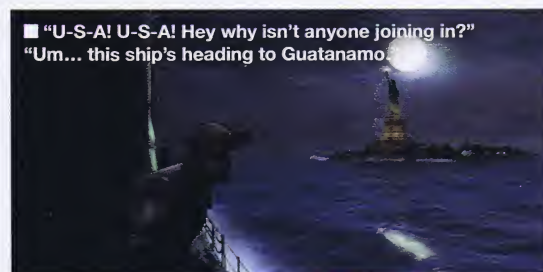
It’s not often you can compare the same game brought to two different generations of game console. Here we have a screenshot from the PS2 version of *Double Agent* to compare with shots from the PS3 version. The disparity between both versions would be even greater in real life as PS2 screenshots don’t take into account how older games lose a lot of their sharpness when appearing on normal resolution television sets.



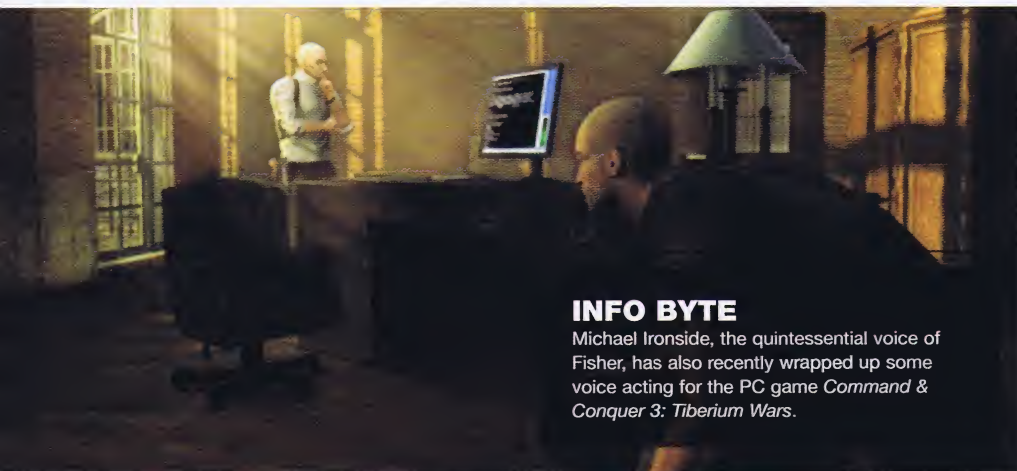
■ “Whoa there... any ID?” “Damn Sam, you killed him!”
“Man, not again! Maybe I should chill with those Judo chop things?” “You think?!”



■ Underwater stabbing: slow, deliberate, still painful.



■ “U-S-A! U-S-A! Hey why isn’t anyone joining in?”
“Um... this ship’s heading to Guantanamo”



INFO BYTE

Michael Ironside, the quintessential voice of Fisher, has also recently wrapped up some voice acting for the PC game *Command & Conquer 3: Tiberium Wars*.



■ Sam was well hidden inside the world’s biggest piano...



PROS:

- Has a centrefold’s good looks
- Volcanic tension

CONS:

- You have no patience
- A better sequel’s coming

VERDICT: Obsessive and gripping both online and off, *Double Agent* will gobble you up. Obtain.

OFFICIAL
SCORE:

09

DIRECT
FROM THE
US

AUSTRALIAN
EXCLUSIVE

ON
SALE
NOW

SYDNEY OPERAHOUSE

LIVE MUSIC

PLAY!

A VIDEO GAME SYMPHONY

Your favourite games performed LIVE by the Sydney Symphony
as giant screens capture stunning gameplay sequences.

'Cinematic...Epic...
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■ **GENRE:** FIGHTING
■ **RELEASE:** NOW
■ **DEVELOPER:** EA CHICAGO
■ **DISTRIBUTOR:** EA GAMES

■ **PLAYERS:** 1-2
■ **PRICE:** \$119.95
■ **HD:** 720p
■ **WEB:** www.ea.com/defjamicon

■ **BACK STORY:** *Def Jam* has always been an odd mix of gaming styles. We have rappers wrestling each other for the hell of it, for NY and for the PSP. Can this series finally nail the reason these rappers are scrapping other than the fact EA and Def Jam records made a deal?

DEF JAM: ICON

Are you ready to get your fight on? Word!

PlayStation.
**BRONZE
AWARD**
8/10

■ Rappers surprisingly flexible



Let's be honest; fighting games are, on the whole, a bit stupid. In that the plots could usually be summarised on a beer coaster. In crayon. In five words or less. Not that we don't like 'em, mind you. By crikey, some of our most favourite hours have been frittered away playing the various iterations of *Tekken*, *Virtua Fighter*, *Mortal Kombat* and the slightly simple, country cousin – *Def Jam*.

Why is *Def Jam* the one with a finger up its nose, tapping its foot and whistling into a jug?

Well, all the other titles are fairly light on plot, but *Def Jam* actually has a downright silly premise: rappers fighting each other.

Now rap has always been a fairly confrontational form of music, and yes they have even been known to shoot one another over some east/west coast silliness.

Which, just quietly, is on a whole other plane of dumb, it'd be like shooting someone just for coming from Melbourne. Perth, sure, but Melbourne? Come on! Increase the peace, Australia!

Anyway the argument that rappers fight each other in real life can be negated by simply saying: "Yes, but in real life they shoot each other. They don't wrestle. Just ask Tupac."

So, we're all agreed that the premise for *Def Jam* and its sequels all have all attained 'silly billy' status when it comes to the narrative? Okay. All right. Now let's talk about how much fun the new one is.

THE NEXT GENERATION OF STUPID

You may have played all the *Def Jam*'s. There are a few on PS2 and PSP. But they all had a major problem – how do you justify musicians getting their punch on in any organised sense? The first one had it like a form of fight club, then they were defending New York – or something equally goofy – but this time they've just gone and said: "Bugger it, we don't need to justify anything – let's just have a good old time." And that's pretty much what you're going to get out of this title. There are a few modes of play. There's Throw Down – which is just a one on one fight with you and the

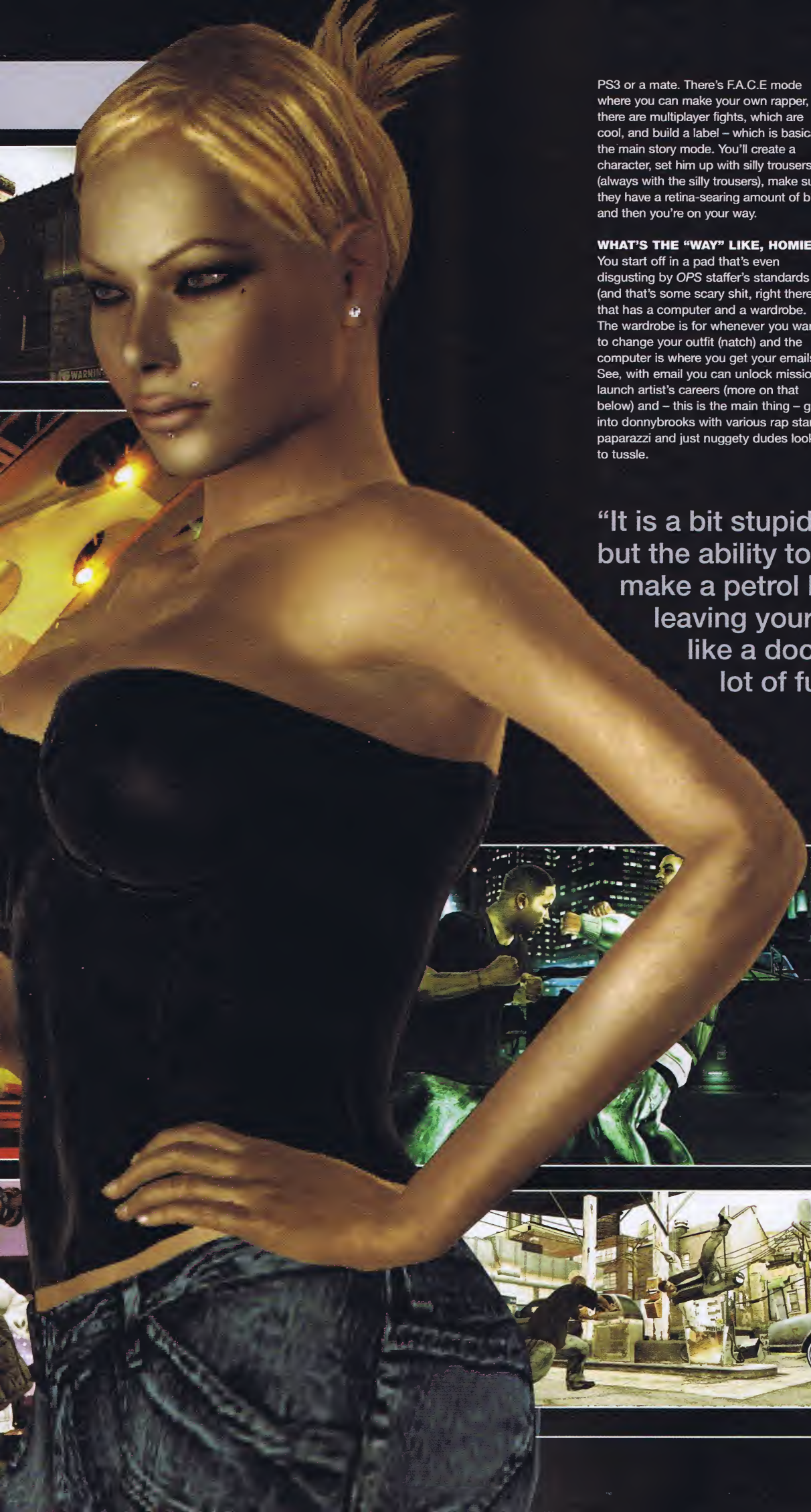


■ "Why did you have to set fire to my Barry Manilow LP Collection, huh?! What'd he ever do to you?"



■ "You dead meat sucka! Whoops, tripped over my pants again. Can we start over?"





PS3 or a mate. There's F.A.C.E mode where you can make your own rapper, there are multiplayer fights, which are cool, and build a label – which is basically the main story mode. You'll create a character, set him up with silly trousers (always with the silly trousers), make sure they have a retina-searing amount of bling and then you're on your way.

WHAT'S THE "WAY" LIKE, HOMIE?

You start off in a pad that's even disgusting by OPS staffer's standards (and that's some scary shit, right there) that has a computer and a wardrobe. The wardrobe is for whenever you want to change your outfit (natch) and the computer is where you get your emails. See, with email you can unlock missions, launch artist's careers (more on that below) and – this is the main thing – get into donnybrooks with various rap stars, paparazzi and just nuggety dudes lookin' to tussle.

ARE THERE CAPS AND ARSES INVOLVED?

The biggest change for this *Def Jam* is the fighting style. The other *Jams* had this strange, but oddly enjoyable, mix of wrestling. And beating your opponents head bloody on the concrete in some seriously nasty finishing moves. Unfortunately they're gone. Fortunately they are replaced with a new fighting system that is sheer lunacy – in a good way though.

TELL US, DAMN YOU!

Okay, at the start of each fight you choose which fighting style to use (there are quite a few, and you'll learn more as the game progresses) and, this is the cool bit, which song will be your theme. Oh yes, you'll be wanting a song by one of your artists playing because it'll make your fighting easier and give you special moves. Say you knock your opponent down with a rather cumbersome volley of kicks and punches, and he's lying

"It is a bit stupid and haphazard but the ability to air turntable and make a petrol bowser explode, leaving your opponent blazing like a doobie is just a hell of a lot of fun."



DON'T HATE THE GAME, HATE THE PLAYA

A rather cool, if brief, element of the game is getting your artists on the charts. This is done by making money from other artists (they give you one from the start to get you going) and helping them out with cash for PR, venues and the like. Later on the artists will make odd requests for cash for kooky reasons. You can say no, but that won't make them happy. So you really have to think before you portion out your cheddar.





■ "You a dime-piece girl, but yo' hairy chest? I can't get down wit' that..."



■ "Oooooof! Right in my Biggie and Tupac!"



I DIDN'T CALL YOU A PIECE OF FARMING EQUIPMENT, BABY...

As well as emails from your artists you'll get communication from, erm... *female acquaintances*. Especially when you change venues and rake in the big bucks with a few platinum records to your name. There seems to be little advantage, however, in meeting their incessant demands for money as, er... you never get to *wrestle* them, if you know what we're saying...



on the ground – keep **LB** pressed down and twiddle the analogue sticks and you'll be able to use the turntable to either put your song on or make stuff explode. See, each level (and there's only about eight, all of which are available from the start) has about four of five things that can explode, spray water, gush fire or just smack you.

Used correctly your air turntable skills can send opponents flying all over the map. When your song plays the screen's colour scheme changes accordingly (there are even a few black and white numbers) and when things start getting close to a knockout for either rapper the screen is imbued with a sort of over-exposed tone. This is a very pretty-looking game and the colour system just adds some much needed depth.

TOTALLY ADDICTED TO BASS

It sounds stupid, and in the game... it is a bit stupid and haphazard, but the ability to air turntable and make a petrol bowser explode leaving your opponent blazing like a doobie (see, *OPM's* hip with the kids... man) is just a hell of a lot of fun. And that's pretty much why *Def Jam: Icon* gets away with limited levels, slightly sluggish fighting controls and a very goofy plot: it's fun. Each level literally pulses with the beat – the buildings in the background vibrating with the bass. By the end of any fight it looks like Martians have been using your selected level for target practice, plus your rapper has likely taken a few knocks too.

SO WHO'S ON THE ROSTER?

This is a little disappointing actually. Previous titles had more diverse artists, like Henry Rollins for *God's* sake – but *Icon* is pure new rap. If names like Big Boi, Bun B, E-40, The Game, Ghostface Killah, Jim Jones, Lil Jon, Ludacris, Method Man, Sticky Fingaz, T.I., and Young Jeezy make you all happy in the strides then you should probably check this title out.

The rappers are all quite authentic looking, but some of us would like the old school represented: where's Run D.M.C., Public Enemy and N.W.A.? While we're at it – why not have other genres of music represented? Nine Inch Nails front man Trent Reznor could whinge you to death, Morrissey could take that stupid bandaid off his nipple and flick it at you and, erm... that Coldplay bloke could just stand still and cry like a little girl with a skinned knee. You know he would. Oh and Goths and Emo kids – tell me you wouldn't want a run at them? Point is *Icon* takes a crazy concept... but doesn't fully realise it. Which is a pity.

SUMMARY?

Ultimately *Def Jam: Icon* is a mixed bag. It's like a game of give and take; sure

they give us the cool song mixy/turntable fight thing, but they take away the bloody wrestling finishing moves. Pounding heads into cement was cool, they should have kept that. There's also a distinct lack of fighting styles in the beginning so repetition is an issue, grapples and counter moves are hard to pull off and are never really all that great.

And yet... there's just something about this title that makes you want to come back and play it again and again. Maybe it's the vibrating background, the banging, and manipulatable soundtrack and how very much fun it is to put the beat down on your mates and start whooping: "Oh no he did-n't, OH YES HE DID!" (sidenote: people think that's funny once. Seriously). In the end it's the fun factor that has given this an eight. It's not a solid eight, it sorta just slipped above seven because we can't stop playing it.

Maybe it's true: you can't stop the music. Nobody can stop the music. Of course you can reverse it and make a car do a burnout on your opponent's head. Logical? Nup. Within the realms of any reality we know? Nup. Heaps of fun? Hell yeah! Holla back! And so forth.

— Anthony (MC-Ant'Knee) O'Connor

PROS:

- Pretty-looking, highly kinetic
- Cool turntable fighting mechanic

CONS:

- Thinly veiled plot, samey fights
- Brawling is a bit cumbersome

VERDICT: There's a lot to dislike about this game, and yet somehow it's won its way into our hearts.

OFFICIAL
SCORE:

08



■ "Yo, dentist – what's the rubber glove for? Aren't you just looking for cavities?"
"Yeah, a cavity search, that's what you... oh, right! Phew, that could have been awkward"



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PS3

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MotorStorm - Part 1: The Hardware

If you're a warm-blooded gamer, you're probably already a fan of MotorStorm. Gameplayer has been putting the game through its paces, and it's exactly is worth cheering about. more...



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are you one?

■ **GENRE:** ACTION-ADVENTURE
■ **RELEASE:** MAY 2007
■ **DEVELOPER:** SCEA SANTA MONICA
■ **DISTRIBUTOR:** SONY

■ **PLAYERS:** 1
■ **PRICE:** \$99.95
■ **RESOLUTION:** 576i
■ **WEB:** www.godofwargame.com

■ **BACK STORY:** *God of War* was a title that just knocked everyone on their arses. It came out of nowhere – with brilliant graphics, awesome combat and an epic, thrilling plot. Making a sequel to such a peerless game must have been daunting. Were the boffins up to it?



GOD OF WAR II

It has to be said: OH. MY. GOD! This game rocks!

The tome that currently resides betwixt your sweaty palms has seen many a game reviewed in its pages and – little baby Jesus willing – will see many more. But very few have had the grunting THUNK of an impact that *God of War* did. It came with little fanfare but was so vicious, so hardcore that jaws worldwide collectively dropped.

It had the mad combat of *Devil May Cry*, the insane acrobatics of *Prince of Persia* and a unique Greek mythological background that set it well apart from the pack. And the plot? You had to kill a GOD.

Buff: the *Vampire Slayer* fans will remember the moment in season five when the “big bad” (Glory) was revealed not to be a demon but a god. Even the atheists among the viewers have to admit the idea of killing a deity – decide – is something of a show-stopper. The problem with *GoW* (and there were only a few) was that it was a little short, and a bit light on narrative. We gave it a nine, a score we stand by. It was great but needed a few tweaks and a lot more length.

AND NOW, TO THE SEQUEL...

It's a rule of thumb that most game sequels are better than the first. Better graphics, better controls,

niggles that had been written about in Internet forums and such have often been fixed. With a few exceptions, the second title in a franchise is usually an improvement over the first.

The real question is – how much has this second entry improved. Has the main character been given a hat? Can you now swim whence once you drowned? Have you been given a sassy, wisecracking sidekick? Or has that game been turned up to eleven? Because *God of War II* makes *God of War* look like a mysterious pair of underpants found in your fridge after a big party. Men's underpants, mind you. With oddly coloured stains. In other words, not anywhere near as good.

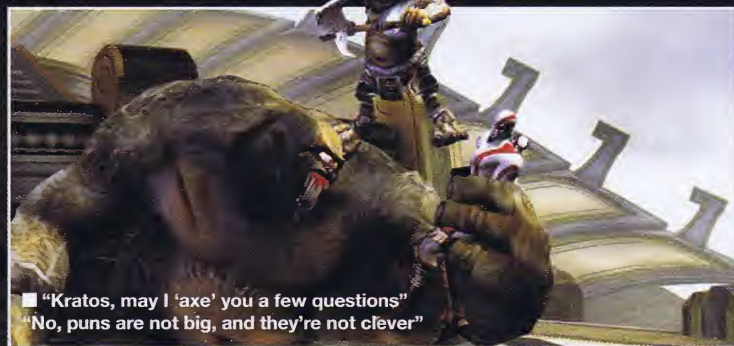
UM... GROUSE METAPHOR, CAN YOU TALK ABOUT THE GAME NOW PLEASE?

The point we're hammering home is that *GoWII* has improved the *GoW* mechanic to insane extreme. It does, however, start off a lot like *GoW* in that it chucks you straight into the action. We'll explain – at the beginning of *GoW* you were introduced to Spartan warrior, protagonist and all-round hard bastard Kratos. After making a deal with the gods he was given these whirly chain things seared into his flesh that he could swoosh around like a fire twirler from Nimbin.

Unlike a fire twirler from Nimbin these chains could decapitate, trap and tear apart all who would seek to do Kratos harm. Handy, eh?


Kratos – not content with being the God of War (sorry, we spoiled the ending of the first one, but if you haven't played it, then you probably deserve to have it spoiled – harsh but fair) Kratos is sending his Spartan armies all over the shop to rape, kill, pillage and kick dogs. You don't actually see the dog kicking. It's implied.

Anyway, for some reason this really gets the gods' goat and they send a Colossus (a 100-foot-tall golden warrior) after Kratos. You still have most of your godly powers (apart from being ridiculously huge) so you can slash him with your chains – but he/it has a rather annoying habit of picking you up and flicking you – like a ball of snot – all across the map. Although in one bit you



■ “Kratos, may I ‘axe’ you a few questions?”
“No, puns are not big, and they’re not clever”





■ "Kratos, unchain my heart – set me free"
"Damn it, are you a Titan or Joe Cocker?"

■ Kratos loves beating his
one-eyed monster

"OH KRATOOOOOOS!"

After golden boy (the Colossus) fangs you through a roof for the third or fourth time you land in a watery area. Now you could just swim away, or you could hack open the screens either side of the pond. Some ladies await your attention. If you're good at pressing the right buttons (snerk!) you'll not only keep two ladies happy, but you'll get lots of health and whatnot. Give it a go.



"There is little or no reason for you to not own this game. So put the magazine down, whack on some pants and go buy it. Go on, we'll be here when you get back!"

INFO BYTE

Throughout the game you can smash urns that will, upon completion, unlock costumes, minigames and all manner of goodness. The fishy Cod of War suit in particular is a hoot!

■ "Hey, Pegasus, you're on fire!" "Yeah I know, I'm kicking ass!"
"No, you're actually on fire!" "Holy crap, we're all gonna die!"

do end up with a little bit of sexual healing (see 'OH KRATOOOOOS'), ultimately this is a primer for those who may have forgotten – or never used – Kratos before. His magic, his chains, oh, and now he can swing across certain gaps. Like Lara Croft but not quite so hot.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

Well you eventually put the beat down on the Colossus until it's about ready to have its bonce cracked open when the god of all gods, Zeus, rocks up and gives you a sword. The catch is you have to drain all your godly powers into it for it to work. But nothing bad can come of that surely? Anyway, long story short – you shoot your mojo into the sword. Zeus swoops down and sticks it in your guts. You die and go to hell (or Hades) where demons rip you to pieces forever. The end.

UM... DUDE, SERIOUSLY? WHAT THE FU-

Okay, okay – it's not really the end. In a very *Prince of Persia* touch something related to time occurs (no, we're not going to tell you). Suffice to say you end up mortal with a quest in mind: you have to find the three Fates and get them to change time. If they can't be persuaded by Kratos' gruff, bad-boy charm, well he might have to go ahead and chop them up. Hey, that's how it goes when you roll with the K-dawg.

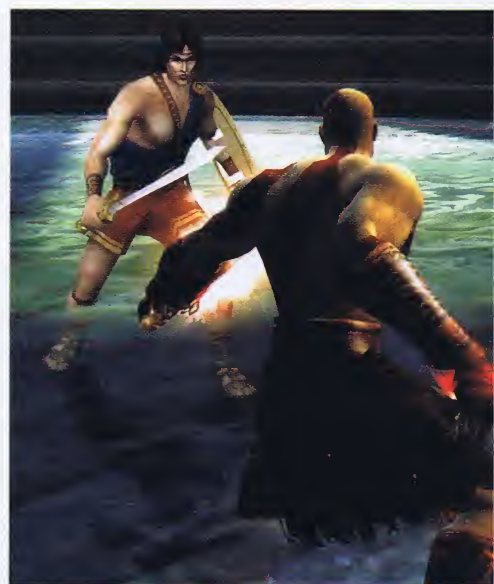
PLEASE NEVER SAY THAT AGAIN...

Anyway, that's the basic plot but as about sixty billion musicians have previously noted it's the journey that makes the [game, in this case] not the ending. And this journey rules. You have to get to the Island of the Fates (no small task) and

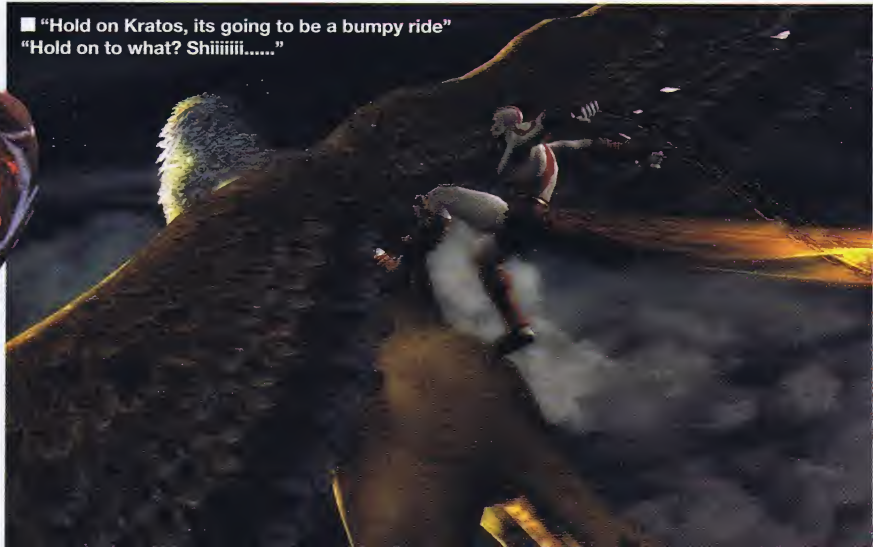
traverse said island (which is like, insanely huge) plus build up your powers and gain new magic and weapons.

IT'S MAGIC, BABY!

Had this been a lazy sequel SCEA would have simply used the same monster models, made it a bit longer and maybe bunged in a couple of minigames for old time's sake. This, however, is not a lazy sequel. In *God of War II* you can access five new types of magic. Typhoon's Bane – which has you shooting air arrows and typhoons if you level it up enough. Cronus's Rage – which gives Kratos the ability to shoot out lightning orbs that can electrify many foes (note: this is a good power to level up). Head of Euryale – did you know Medusa had a sister? Well, she does and the chick is... well... let's just say she has a "good personality". Actually she



■ "Hold on Kratos, its going to be a bumpy ride"
"Hold on to what? Shiiiiiii....."



■ "Ha ha ha I can see right up your loincloth. Meh, I don't know what Zeus is jealous ab...OOOFF!" SQUISH!



■ Would you like 'flies' with that?

doesn't even have that. She's an evil fatty and a hard to beat boss. Anyway, her head can be used to turn baddies to stone. Atlas Quake – which allows you to make the earth move, sadly not with your sexual prowess, but with magic. And Rage of The Titans – where you become engulfed in flame and can attack with hugely destructive combos, especially if you've levelled up your chains. You can also freeze time at certain points – another nice touch, thematically linked with the game's concepts of destiny and fate.

BEEN THERE, DECAPITATED THAT...

Alright, it's probably fair to say the magics are pretty much variations on a theme. Still not impressed? Alright how about the fact Kratos flies on Pegasus the flaming, flying horse on more than one level! Yeah, that's right. Kratos takes to the skies and even has a boss fight up there. This won't be the only time you'll be airborne however, as Kratos meets a certain winged fellow (read up on Greek myths, you'll work it out) and literally fights him for said wings...as they fall off a cliff. Yeah, that's right. Kratos is such a hard bastard this time he'll punch a guy even as he's plummeting to his doom. The guy makes Solid Snake look like a Mardi Gras float. Come on, feel the awesome!

You'll also find extra weapons like the Barbarian Hammer, the Spear of Destiny and the Blade of Olympus along your travels. Although, to be honest, it's best to upgrade those chains as some of the combos you can pull off are pure genius.

OKAY, IT'S A GOOD GAME. BUT WHAT ABOUT THE BOSSES?

One of the biggest criticisms about GoW was the lack of epic boss fights. They chucked the Hydra fight at you at the start and then... well, apart from the end battle nothing could really match that. Not so this time; there are heaps of boss fights, however most of them are more intimate, fighting enemies your size. Characters from Greek mythology pop up all over the place and you'll often have to battle them. These fights are lots of fun, ending with the button pressing combos that were so popular in the first game. That's not to say you won't fight big bosses too. There are about three or four massive monsters you'll have to kill – which is funny because GoWII is about three or four times longer than the first game.

AND THE SWEET, SWEET GORE?

Oh you want blood? How's this for a special kill: a warrior is attacking you. You rip off his sword arm and hack his face off with his own weapon which still attached to his bleeding, severed limb. Or how about the one where you throw your chains either side of the beast's neck and flip over him, blades meeting in the

middle, severing his head. Those who were worried GoW might get more family friendly – worry not! If anything they've gone bloodier... but we won't ruin the moments for you – some have to be seen to be believed.

BIG... WE MEAN REALLY BIG

One of the best things about GoWII is scale. You really do feel like you're in a larger-than-life environment where the gods and men co-exist, where Olympus could be a place not so far away, where horses the size of Tasmania drag you to an island the size of erm... several Tasmanias.

HEY, IF YOU LOVE THIS GAME SO MUCH – WHY DON'T YOU MARRY IT?

The question has to be asked – is there anything not good about GoWII. Alright, if we want to be utterly pedantic we could say the graphics have not improved that much. But then, they were pretty damn flawless to begin with. We could mention the gameplay is a tad on the repetitive side, but it's like they know when you're bored with fighting and throw a tricky puzzle, or change of venue at you. And yes, some of the puzzles are frustrating and there are a couple of swinging bits that verge on the gritted teeth, controller

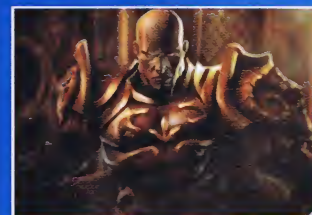
hurling rage inducing – but the satisfaction of beating them is so damn good... it sort of negates them as cons.

FINAL THOUGHTS?

Overall GoWII is probably the best action game for the PlayStation 2 – on par with GTA: SA. For a system that's soon to be lapped by its big brother the PS3 – this is an utterly immersive title with so many great moments it's hard to remember them all. Put simply: there is little or no reason for you to not own this game. So put the magazine down, whack on some pants and buy it. Go on, we'll be here when you get back! ➤ Anthony O'Connor

THE END?

Okay, some people are going to complain about the ending. It does have a certain cliff-hanger quality. Not like *Medal of Honor: Rising Sun*, mind you, there is actual closure with GoWII – it just sets up the next sequel very well. So well, in fact, we can't wait for the PS3 third chapter. How many sleeps?



PROS:

- It's probably the best, last great game for the PlayStation 2

CONS:

- You don't like action or you're just a big fat stupid head

VERDICT: Put simply *God of War II* is likely to be the best game in this last lot of PlayStation 2 titles.

OFFICIAL
SCORE:
10

■ **GENRE:** ACTION
 ■ **RELEASE:** NOW
 ■ **DEVELOPER:** ROCKSTAR LEEDS
 ■ **DISTRIBUTOR:** ROCKSTAR

■ **PLAYERS:** 1
 ■ **PRICE:** \$49.95
 ■ **RESOLUTION:** 576i
 ■ **WEB:** www.rockstargames.com

■ **BACK STORY:** GTA needs no introduction, but as everyone gears up for the next iteration of the franchise on PS3 with *Grand Theft Auto IV*, it's good to see that Rockstar hasn't quite given up on the PS2 yet.

■ "Lime Green suit – check. Ice cold swag – check. Ladies by my side – wait where did everybody go?"



GRAND THEFT AUTO: VICE CITY STORIES

We built this city on rock and roll...

Grand Theft Auto is a one-of-a-kind series: the kind that defines genres and changes gaming. It goes without saying that very few franchises can stand toe-to-toe with GTA without coming out on the other side looking bruised and battered, covered in blood and God knows what else. *Vice City Stories*, previously released on the PSP and now ported across to the PS2, is yet another stellar addition to the series.

Set in the ever-awesome *Vice City* universe, you play as Vic Vance, brother of Lance Vance from the original PS2 *Vice City*. At the beginning of the game Vic is a proud member of the United States Armed forces, but a combination of his hilariously deceitful superior officer and Vic's own stupidity soon puts a halt to this honourable career path. Before long Vic is well on his way to a prosperous life of crime and gluttony. Morally balanced individuals are not welcome in the morally bankrupt world of GTA.

ETERNAL FLAME

All the major gameplay elements you know and love are present in *Grand Theft Auto: Vice City Stories*. The huge, open-ended city, the non-linear mission structure, the tried and tested gameplay is the same as it's ever been. Thankfully these game mechanics rarely get old, and the familiarity is almost comforting.

But there are some improvements. In fact, compared to Rockstar's previous PSP port, *Liberty City Stories*, this game is actually a bit of a step up, looking and playing much closer to the original PS2 classics. This is most evident in the missions themselves. In *Liberty City Stories* missions were a little more linear and barely deviated from the 'drive and kill enemy' structure. *Vice City Stories*, however, has far more variety, keeping things from getting dull or repetitive.

Considering the game is pretty much a straight port of the PSP original, the game doesn't look too bad either. The GTA engine is undoubtedly showing its age

(especially when it comes to character detail) and it might have been nice to see the graphics polished up a little more for the PS2 version, but considering that the game is retailing for the budget price of \$50 we can't expect too much on that front.

Unfortunately some control issues, such as the inability to move while in precision aiming mode, which was wisely rectified in *San Andreas*, have not been fixed for *Vice City Stories*. Considering the added dexterity of the PS2 controller it would have been nice if Rockstar had made the effort, adding a little more depth to the control system. These quibbles, however, are minor and are hardly gamebreaking complaints.

YOU'RE THE VOICE TRY AND UNDERSTAND IT

Vice City has always been one of the best settings for *Grand Theft Auto* hilarity, and *Vice City Stories*

PlayStation
SILVER AWARD
 9/10





■ Sailors: they love to party.

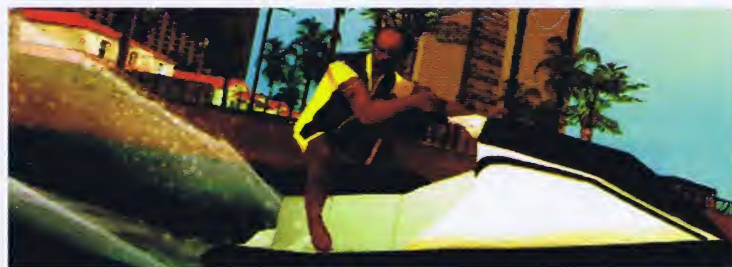


■ "Ouch! My hands! Ow! Man, every time I touch the steering wheel it burns...I really should have invested in those sun reflectors..."



INFO BYTE

Vice City Stories actually takes place before the original *GTA: Vice City*. This allows Lance's brother Vic, who got unceremoniously 'whacked' in a drug deal gone bad, to make an appearance.



"There is nothing cooler than zipping away from the scene of the crime with the top down, the sun setting as 'I Want to Know What Love Is' blasts from the stereo."

takes full advantage of this. The '80s tack from the original *Vice City* returns in all its flamboyant glory, and the influence is so strong that it actually has an impact on gameplay. In short, there is nothing cooler than zipping away from the scene of the crime with the top down, the sun setting as 'I Want to Know What Love Is' blasts from the stereo.

It helps, of course, when you have some of the best voice acting in gaming. *Vice City Stories*, may have one of the weaker storylines in the series (when compared to others), but that doesn't stop it from having some of the most memorable characters. Vic's bestiality obsessed Sergeant is comic genius, and many familiar characters from the GTA universe manage to show their face in

the game at some stage.

But best of all everything just feels right, and this is what the *Vice City* games, above all others in the *GTA* franchise, have always done best. The music, the characters, the environment, the radio stations, the posters – everything just reeks of '80s culture. Other *GTA* games have attempted to create the same kind of atmosphere, but *Vice City* is more vivid. With *Vice City Stories* the whole concept just makes perfect sense, and the game totally benefits from it.

In the end, it's actually a testament to the original PSP game that *Vice City Stories* makes the translation to the PS2's superior hardware and still remains a compelling experience. The flaws that come with the series still exist, and have perhaps become more apparent as time has passed. The graphics are dated, the

camera system is irritating and aiming is damn near impossible, but it rarely matters because this is *Grand Theft Auto*, probably the most influential series of the last decade.

Considering this is probably the final *GTA* game we'll see on the PS2, we really should pay our respects. The game is a straight PSP port, and yes it does show, but for the price of \$50 can we really complain? The answer is, of course, no. If you were wise enough to pick this game up when it was originally released then there is no need for you to get the same game twice. If you didn't, or don't own a PSP, this is a must buy. It's a weaker title overall than *GTA: San Andreas*, but there's no denying it recaptures the charm of the original *Vice City*. That such a well-worn formula is still so thoroughly entertaining is remarkable. **Mark Serrels**

VIDEO KILLED THE RADIO STAR

Grand Theft Auto just wouldn't be the same without the radio stations, and *Vice City Stories* doesn't disappoint. The music is obviously awesome (it's the '80s, the greatest era of music EVER) but once again it's the DJs and the callers that steal the show. Like the guy who calls in to dedicate a song to his recently turned hooker wife to say thanks for putting in the extra hours. The song? 'Nightshift' by The Commodores. That's not to mention the absolute comedy gold that is Lazlow, making an early appearance as an 'intern' at Vulture Rock. Genius.



PROS:

- It's *GTA* and it's awesome. Duh
- Big improvement on *GTA: LCS*

CONS:

- No update from PSP version
- No multiplayer or co-op

VERDICT: A fitting end to *Grand Theft Auto's* PS2 career! Can you feel it, coming in the air tonight?

OFFICIAL SCORE:
09



■ **GENRE:** RACING
■ **RELEASE:** NOW
■ **DEVELOPER:** EA UK
■ **DISTRIBUTOR:** EA

■ **PLAYERS:** 1-2
■ **PRICE:** \$49.95
■ **RESOLUTION:** 480p
■ **WEB:** www.ea.com/burnout/dominator

■ **BACK STORY:** *Burnout* single-handedly revived the arcade racing genre, and with its third instalment, *Burnout 3: Takedown*, it really kicked into another gear (pun possibly intended) introducing a new level of aggressive driving. Will the fifth game set the world on fire?



■ "The salesmen told me a cool car would get me hot chicks. He lied"

BURNOUT DOMINATOR

Smoke 'em if you got 'em!



Burnout 3: *Takedown* is without a doubt one of the finest games to grace the PS2, and without a shadow of a doubt one of the greatest arcade racers of all time. By the time the fourth game, *Burnout Revenge*, had wheeled around, EA continued to revise the established formula and one of the new features introduced divided the *Burnout* fan base considerably.

"Traffic Checking", which allowed you to ram into cars traveling in the same direction and send them flying like hockey pucks was a major inconsistency with

the previous game, and took a lot of risk out of speeding through the correct lane. Many felt that this deducted from the experience significantly, and despite many other refinements like improved track design, they lost interest in *Burnout Revenge* fairly quickly.

SO WHERE'S THE DOMINATRIX? GUYS?

Rather than carrying on along the same line, *Burnout Dominator* takes a selection of the best features from the *Burnout* series and brings them together in the

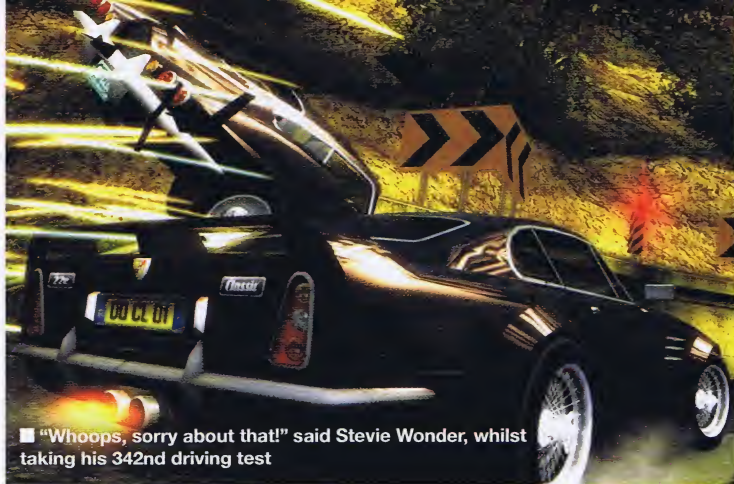
one title. By the same token, some features that appeared in previous titles have been left out, and depending on your personal preferences, the removal of these features could be either a positive or negative move.

From all the way back in *Burnout 2: Point of Impact*, Burnout Chains return and are probably the most impactful addition to *Burnout Dominator*. As a refresher, performing a Burnout Chain is fairly complex task to explain, and similarly tricky to perform.

To start with,

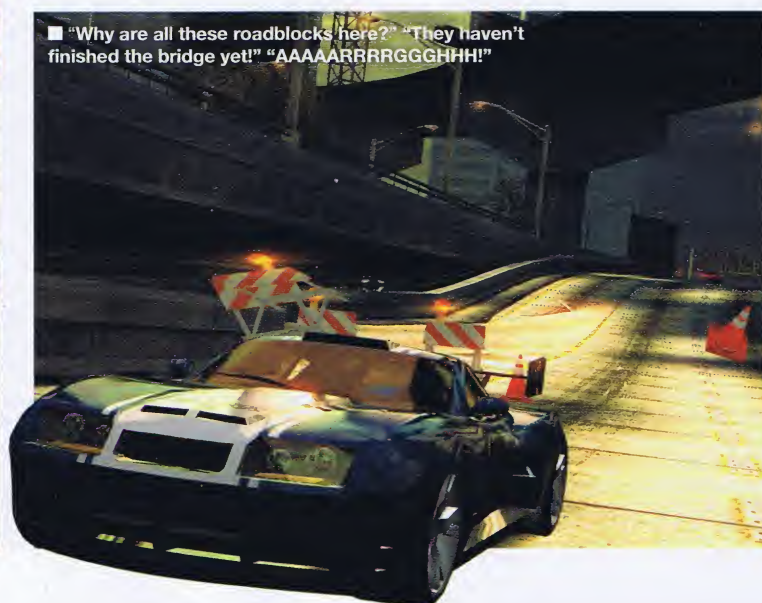
you need to have accumulated, through all manner of illegal driving acts, a full boost bar. Once you've done this your car reaches a 'supercharged' state. Once supercharged, you have to expend your entire boost bar in one go (known as a Burnout), and continue driving dangerously as you career along at breakneck speed. If you manage to create enough chaos before your boost bar is completely depleted, you're rewarded with another full boost bar. The premise is that if you can keep creating traffic incidents while rocketing along the road, you're





■ "Whoops, sorry about that!" said Stevie Wonder, whilst taking his 342nd driving test

"Burnout Dominator takes a selection of the best features from the *Burnout* series and brings them together."



■ "Why are all these roadblocks here?" "They haven't finished the bridge yet!" "AAAAARRRRGGGGHHH!"

given an infinite supply of nitrous oxide. It's certainly far easier said than done, and Burnout Chaining adds a further level of challenge and insanity to the mix.

WRECK IT BEFORE YOU CHECK IT

From *Burnout 3* comes the aggressive driving and takedowns that we all love so much, but also the more rigid approach to traffic collisions, meaning that *Burnout Revenge*'s Traffic Checking has been kicked to the curb.

Returning from *Burnout Revenge* are the in-race Crashbreakers (also lovingly known as 'Taliban Takedowns') that feature in any race with opponents, and they now seem to pack a bit more power. It now seems much easier to take out opponents in a fiery explosion of molten death. Also back from *Revenge* are the Revenge Rivals, to keep track of the opponents that wreck you. While changes to the boost formula mean that you don't actually get any extra benefits from dealing your automotive payback, vindication is still rewarding enough on its own.

ALL BOOST, NO CADBURY

The boost bar has seen some significant changes as well, which largely mean you have access to more boost in general. Your boost bar stays at the equivalent of

a full, four-segment boost bar from *Burnout 3*. Any takedown you perform fills your boost bar entirely. There is no boost penalty for crashing, but to detonate your Crashbreaker you have to sacrifice all of your remaining boost – obviously there's the distinct chance of getting the takedown boost in the process.

Based on the information imparted so far, you'd definitely be justified in thinking that *Dominator* is the best *Burnout* game to date. Sadly, there's one major bombshell left to impart, and it's probably the explanation for *Dominator*'s reduced price tag.

CRASHED AND BURNT

Sadly, *Burnout Dominator* does not feature the much-loved Crash mode at all, and is also completely devoid of any online play modes. While Traffic Checking divided the fans on *Burnout Revenge*, the neglect of these features is what will split opinions on *Dominator*. If you're more a fan of the racing and your idea of multiplayer was

hitting some splitscreen on the couch with your mates, you're well catered for. If you got your thrills from causing maximum damage in Crash Mode or tearing it up online... well, sorry.

On the upside, as a result of online play's absence, the local multiplayer is very well conceived and set out. You've got the option of either two-player splitscreen racing, or if you've only got the one controller handy, you can play 'hot potato' style in Party Play mode. The race types available are tailored accordingly, so more intensive modes like Race and Eliminator are only available for splitscreen mode, while Party Play keeps the action sharp and short to keep the wait times short.

In keeping with its roots, *Burnout Dominator* maintains the name of the *Burnout* series by providing the very finest arcade racer that money can buy. In spite of missing two key features, the tweaks to the core gameplay make it the best *Burnout* yet, and at a paltry fifty bucks, it'll speed off the shelf. **Nick O'Shea**

PROS:

- It's got *Burnout 3*'s intensity
- The return of Burnout Chains

CONS:

- No Crash Mode or online play
- May put off pro-traffic checkers

VERDICT: Despite missing a few features, *Burnout* still dominates the competition.

OFFICIAL
SCORE:
08

NEW SKIDS ON THE BLOCK

To fill out the race types in compensation for the missing Crash Mode, *Burnout Dominator* has included a few new race modes. The best new mode is 'Maniac', which basically challenges you to chalk up a particular score set by others, roughly translating into a 220km/h game of horse in multiplayer. Regrettably, some of the other new modes aren't as good, with the Drift Challenge only scoring you for drifts over a short, uneventful course, and the Near Miss Challenge sadly rewarding you for driving like your blind grandmother.



■ **GENRE:** FIRST-PERSON SHOOTER ■ **PLAYERS:** 1-6
■ **RELEASE:** NOW ■ **PRICE:** \$69.95
■ **DEVELOPER:** AMAZE ■ **GAMESHARE:** NO
■ **DISTRIBUTOR:** ACTIVISION ■ **WEB:** www.amazeentertainment.com

■ **BACK STORY:** Most of the impressive line of *COD* games are pumped out by Infinity Ward, but Amaze Entertainment took care of the PSP version. Amaze has been behind many a PSP port over the past few years including *The Sims 2* and *Over the Hedge*.

CALL OF DUTY: ROADS TO VICTORY

"I don't know, but I've been told..."

There hasn't been a portable *Call of Duty* installment since the atrocious and best-forgotten Nokia N-Gage capped itself in the groin with a dismal port of *United Offensive*, but that's not to say that *Call of Duty: Roads to Victory* is the gaming equivalent to Vincent D'Onofrio in *Full Metal Jacket* – it's not.

While it's certainly not going to topple the Axis of Evil on its lonesome, what it offers is a stripped back first-person shooter experience that, at its very best, manages to capture a good chunk of its console brethren's immersive appeal. For the most part the environments are tight and ever-evolving landscapes that are wonderfully designed to provide the player with interesting tactical choices to make during an extended firefight. The series' trademark of providing a revolving squad of contextual allies to back you up and quip the odd bit of helpful army jargon also remains a stalwart component of the PSP's *COD* iteration.

At its worst, however, *Roads To Victory* is let down by a non-intuitive

control scheme which never manages to be anything more than unwieldy. Ejecting a flurry of 7.62mm rounds into the chest of a hapless Hitler-ite is far more taxing than it ought to be, although it's made strangely bearable by the fact that the AI isn't particularly solid. At times they'll clump together in a shootable mass of Mein Kampf, spawn in the most predictable places and even stand around motionlessly like retarded mannequins. A rather forgiving auto-aiming system helps to rectify the control issues, but it feels a bit cheap and some weapons require you to be right in the face of the enemy for it to lock on to them.

By that point, you're most likely riddled with German-engineered lead.

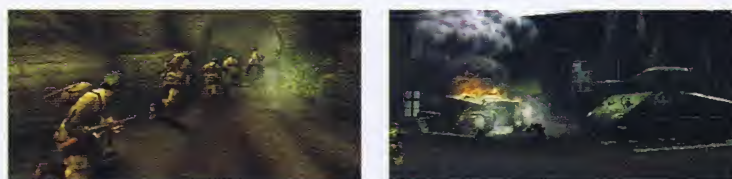
Another unwelcome realisation is the inability to execute a mid-level save if the going gets tough, which means that replaying a mission is as common as foot-rot on a marine.

There are fourteen missions to slog through during the campaign, but they lack the inventivechutzpah that

generally accompanies a foray into *COD*'s battlefields. At around the halfway mark, it's almost as if you're playing the same seven levels over again. It's not a long tour of duty, either – a vaguely experienced gamer will tear through this in just over five hours. While this might suit the PSP's mobile application, it's an aspect that quickly becomes a flaw due to a lack of online play. There are ad-hoc facilities for up to six players, but everyone knows the real meat is in hopping on the wire to frag and slag off some anonymous newbs. Initially it might look and feel just like another epic saga in the long, proud line of *Call Of Duty* militia, but *Roads To Victory* is the watered-down whiskey to the console versions' hard-bitten vets – and they demand more. You will too. **Toby McCasker**

PROPELLOR HEADS

In a very welcome addition to the series – and one we hope will carry over into future *COD* efforts – there are now flighty bits where you get the opportunity to strap into a bomber and take to the skies for some airborne blasting. It's hellacious fun, although it's tempered by the realisation that you've got to come back down to earth next level to have somewhat less fun than you are at the moment.



PROS:

- Sweet bomber sections
- Excellent level design

CONS:

- Wonky AI
- No Gameshare? Puh-leease...

VERDICT: First-person shooters on the PSP will struggle. *Roads to Victory* is no exception.

OFFICIAL SCORE:
06

■ **GENRE:** ACTION
 ■ **RELEASE:** APRIL 2007
 ■ **DEVELOPER:** COLLISION STUDIOS
 ■ **DISTRIBUTOR:** ATARI

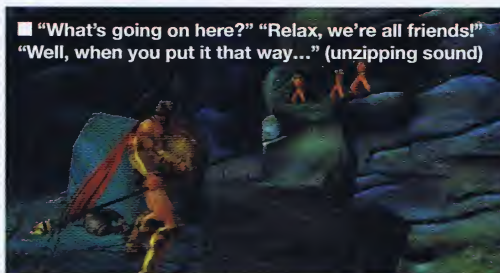
■ **PLAYERS:** 1
 ■ **PRICE:** \$79.95
 ■ **GAMESHARE:** NO
 ■ **WEB:** 300videogame.warnerbros.com

■ **BACK STORY:** Based on the movie, based on the graphic novel, based on events from 480 BC, 300: *March to Glory* puts a stylish spin on the legendary Battle of Thermopylae, where 300 men held off the combined Persian forces of a million.

PS3 PS2 PSP REVIEW



■ "They look really nice trimmed, don't you think?" "Shaving your armpits is gay." "WHAT! What did you say?"



■ "What's going on here?" "Relax, we're all friends!" "Well, when you put it that way..." (unzipping sound)



■ "Check me out, pretty buff, eh?" "Yeah, maybe... but its whats on the inside that counts"

INFO BYTE

The ambush scene in *Sin City*, where Clive Owen's character Dwight McCarthy lured the mafia thugs into a narrow alley, was inspired by the Battle of Thermopylae.

300: MARCH TO GLORY

"Holy crap! There are more Persians here than at a rug sale!"

300: *March to Glory* puts you in the sandals of the warrior-king Leonidas as he defends Greece, and democracy as we know it, from the onslaught of the Persian army. The story unfolds through stylised cut-scenes torn straight from the pages of the graphic novel, with narration provided by David Wenham – who plays the storyteller Diliros in the movie. While no other stars provide voice talent, a capable group of voice actors do a solid job. Utilising a full orchestra, 300's music is epic, but does tend to loop a bit too often, detracting from an otherwise stellar soundtrack.

The core gameplay has you guiding Leonidas as you hew through the Persian forces alongside your fellow Spartan warriors. You can wield any combination of weapons, and switch between armaments at the push of a button. Each selection has

its own strengths, and you'll need to tailor your weaponry selection to the situation. By mixing heavy and light attacks, there's a fair array of combos to choose from.

In the midst of battle, you even get hails of arrows that 'blot out the sun', instantly turning anyone without a shield into a pincushion. While the characters and environments are fairly basic, the developer has maintained a graphic novel approach to the visuals and manages to pull it off quite well.

As you build up 'rage', you can unleash chunks of it with enhanced attacks that instantly kill minor foes via impalement or decapitation. Saving up a whole bar to use skills, however, helps you recover your health or provides enhanced abilities for a limited time. As you defeat enemies, you can also spend your experience points to upgrade your weapons, equipment,

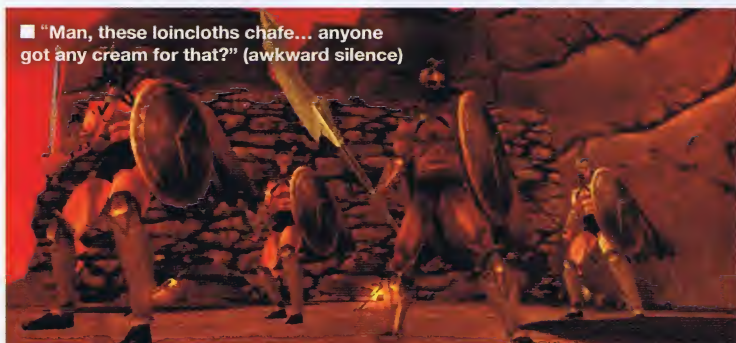
abilities and combos.

Boss battles are fairly basic and use a 'coloured attack' system to telegraph their attacks. While this makes the game forgiving for newcomers, it's not particularly challenging for your average gamer. There are even sequences where you command a phalanx of soldiers that huddle together to form a wall of shields. These provide a diversion from the usual combat, but they're a similarly drab case of just blocking and stabbing as prompted with little challenge involved.

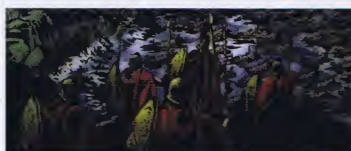
All told, 300: *March to Glory* is as deep a button-bashing slash 'em up as you can get on the PSP at the moment, so while it's all a tad bland, until SCE Santa Monica or Capcom pull their proverbial fingers out, this is about the closest thing you'll get to a *God of War* or *Devil May Cry* on PSP. **Nick O'Shea**

THIS IS SPARTA!

Amid the extras included, there are the first two trailers for the 300 movie, which will no doubt entice you to see the movie if you haven't already. On top of that, there are a series of interviews with Frank Miller himself, which are a great window into his vision of the battle of Sparta, but also an insight into the weapons that were used in the Battle of Thermopylae, and just how advanced Spartan King Leonidas' tactics were for the time.



■ "Man, these loincloths chafe... anyone got any cream for that?" (awkward silence)



PROS:

- One of the best brawlers around
- Distinctive visual style

CONS:

- Limited replay value
- Gameplay could be pacier

VERDICT: 300: *March to Glory* is a decent enough brawler, but probably won't rock your world.

OFFICIAL SCORE:

07

■ **GENRE:** STRATEGY
■ **RELEASE:** NOW
■ **DEVELOPER:** FIRAXIS/FULLFAT
■ **DISTRIBUTOR:** TAKE 2

■ **PLAYERS:** 1-4
■ **PRICE:** \$49.95
■ **GAMESHARE:** NO
■ **WEB:** www.firaxis.com

■ **BACK STORY:** Sid Meier is a game designer of considerable renown, with a portfolio full of genre-defining strategy games like *Civilisation*, *Railroad Tycoon* and *Alpha Centauri*. Finally, his genius works have made it to the PSP, with *Sid Meier's Pirates!*

SID MEIER'S PIRATES!

Puffy shirts are definitely back in style

Sid Meier's *Pirates!* puts you in the pantaloons of a would-be pirate. Ten years ago, as a mere child, your family was betrayed by a malevolent Marquis, and although you managed to escape, your relatives were sold into slavery. Finally of age, with a decade of planning your revenge behind you, now is the time to act.

The beauty of *Pirates!* is that you can play it in a number of ways. Ultimately your goal is to rescue your entire family, but how you get there is ultimately your choice. Pillaging ships on the high seas and raiding ports is the most straightforward way to reach your goal, but you can also search for buried treasures, make a legitimate quid trading commodities, or hire yourself out as

a privateer. Suave swashbucklers can even go from port to port wooing the governors' daughters and reap the benefits of the wealthy life.

Your interactions with the different factions in *Pirates!* have considerable ramifications. If you target a particular faction repeatedly, you'll be barred from their ports and if you keep pushing your luck, they'll put a bounty on your head and send boats after you. When you find yourself in an unfriendly corner of the ocean, with fleets baying for your blood, you'd better hope the winds are favourable. Conversely, if you champion a faction's cause, they'll offer discounts on ship upgrades and be more open to trade in their ports.

Still, the life of a pirate is a difficult one, and you can't be the terror of the tides

forever. Eventually, age will weary you and you'll have to put to port forever, so it's a matter of creating the greatest legacy you can within a limited time. By enforcing a time limit, there's a drive to achieve as much as you can and try different approaches on subsequent attempts, rather than most sandbox-style games that give you complete freedom to take your time and exhaust all your options in one go.

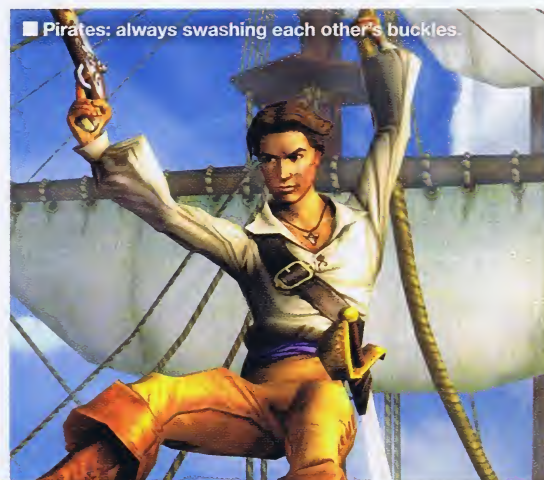
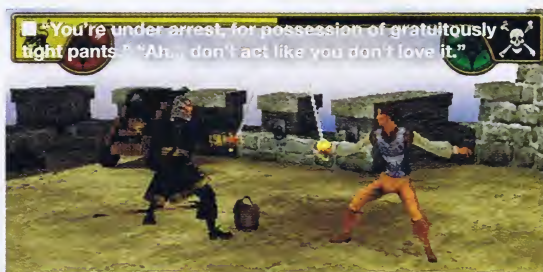
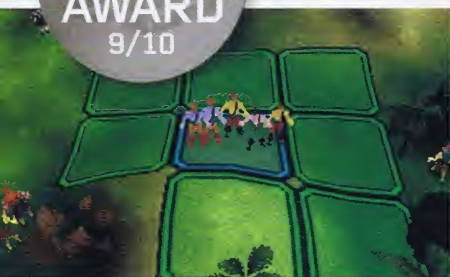
Sid Meier's Pirates! has always been a fantastically absorbing game, and now there's nowhere you can't fly the Jolly Roger and scupper a few Spanish galleons. It's more addictive than the rapage of innocent wenches, and at the bargain price of 50 pieces of eight, you'd have to be a scurvy-ridden scallywag to let it sail by unnoticed. **— Nick O'Shea**

YO HO

The only Achilles heel of *Pirates!* lies in the modification of the minigames for the PSP conversion. The changes made to the treasure hunting and sneaking minigames help speed up gameplay, but by not recreating the minigames entirely, they've also stripped away the degree of visual polish that the other unchanged minigames display. The changes definitely make for a more enjoyable game, but don't quite match up to the high standard of the rest of the game.



PlayStation
SILVER AWARD
9/10



PROS:

- Accessible, but deep
- Pirates freakin' rock

CONS:

- No Keira Knightley
- No cabin boys (sorry Dave)

VERDICT: A superb strategy title with immense replay value, *Sid Meier's Pirates!* is a must-have.

OFFICIAL SCORE:

09



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PG

Mild violence,
Mild coarse
language

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UBISOFT

This is living

PLAYSTATION 3

PS3 PS2 PSP REVIEW

■ **GENRE:** RACING
■ **RELEASE:** NOW
■ **DEVELOPER:** VIRTUOSO
■ **DISTRIBUTOR:** UBISOFT

■ **PLAYERS:** 1-4
■ **PRICE:** \$79.95
■ **GAMESHARE:** NO
■ **WEB:** www.virtuosgames.com

■ **BACK STORY:** *Asphalt Urban GT* didn't really make too much of a splash in the racing market when it came out. Previously released on mobile phones and N-Gage, Virtuos hopped under the bonnet and fine tuned the donk for a PSP release.



■ Crazy driver? You'd have to be to buy this



■ Wanted. A better game



■ "You know what would be nice? Some MUSIC!"



ASPHALT URBAN GT 2

Strap yourselves in – this is going to be a bumpy ride

When you hear that the PSP is receiving an N-Gage conversion, that's a pretty clear sign that it's time to run for the hills. *Asphalt Urban GT 2* may not be entirely without merit, but it doesn't do a hell of a lot to defy the precedent either.

The concept of *AUGT2* is to immerse you in the underground racing circuit and let you go 'pedal to the metal' against skilled opponents in gorgeous cities all over the world. The reality is slightly more stark than that. You certainly do race on a variety of globally-themed tracks, but the designs are pretty basic and uninspired and the AI racers are almost laughable. There are around ten different types of race modes, but to be brutally honest they're all pretty much exactly the same. Braving the career mode is an exercise in masochism, and without much to differentiate between the race types it's a tedious case of repetition.

Nitro boosts are pretty much synonymous with arcade racers these days, and *AUGT2* certainly features N2O. You earn nitro by simply driving through the massive floating nitro bottle powerups that are littered around the course, and

while there is an element of risk-reward trade-off involved (you get to go faster by spoiling your racing line), compared to the deeper (and far better) systems of *Ridge Racer* and *Burnout*, it's pretty shallow and unrewarding.

While you're racing you can also pick up cash icons for extra winnings, or get bonuses from pulling off 'outrageous' stunts like drifting, getting big air and running other cars off the road. Similarly, if you crash, your wallet cops the sting of the repair bill. Once again, *AUGT2* mimics *Burnout*, but does it with far less finesse and just comes off looking cheap and tacky.

While it's certainly an arcade racer, the vehicles in *AUGT2* handle like a Matchbox car with a screwdriver driven through it. Aside from the tinny screech of your tyres, you're given very little indication of traction, and the drifting for a game based on urban

racing is terrible.

The strengths of *AUGT2* are that unlike some arcade racing games, it does actually feature licensed vehicles. The models are fairly well rendered, even if they aren't particularly detailed. There are some other nice touches too, like a limited facility to tune and modify your vehicles and speed cameras that snap a shot of your car as you came along at licence-rescinding speeds.

Ultimately though, *Asphalt Urban GT 2* tries too hard to be *Burnout* and *Need for Speed*, and fails to be either. In fact, it doesn't even get remotely close. It may be a simple and accessible racer for inexperienced drivers but when you can get *Burnout* and *Ridge Racer* on PSP for the same price or less, there's just no reason to spend your money on a lemon like this. **Nick O'Shea**

PROS:

- Features real licensed vehicles
- A decent variety of modes

CONS:

- Poor handling
- Sub-par visuals

VERDICT: Compared to its competition, *Asphalt Urban GT 2* doesn't have the horsepower to keep up.

IT'S NOT APPLIED SCIENCE

Despite boasting a 'soundtrack featuring modern recording artists', our review copy of *AUGT2* seemed to only want to belt out Maximo Park's 'Apply Some Pressure'. During the intro. Every time we returned to the menus after a race. While it's certainly a decent track, a bit more variety in the jukebox wouldn't have gone astray. By contrast, there's no music whatsoever in game – only the growl of car engines. Featuring a single licensed track is a pretty pissweak gesture, and even a variety of midi music would have been preferable.



OFFICIAL
SCORE:
03



OBJECTS IN YOUR REAR-VIEW MIRROR
MAY APPEAR MORE REAL THAN THEY ARE.



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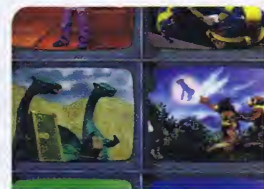
PLAYSTATION 3

FILM

Seth Green and pals ham it up with *Robot Chicken*, Leonardo DiCaprio cements his acting chops in *Blood Diamond*, Tobey Macguire swings into *Spider-Man 3* and more!



BEST BITS



DVD OF THE MONTH

ROBOT CHICKEN (M)

DIRECTOR: Various **STARRING:** Seth Green, Breckin Meyer, Seth MacFarlane, Sarah Michelle Gellar, Mila Kunis, Macaulay Culkin, Scarlett Johansson, Alex Borstein, Donald Faison, Mark Hamill, Ashton Kutcher, Rachael Leigh Cook, Phyllis Diller, Topher Grace, Christian Slater, Amy Smart, Erika Christensen, Wilmer Valderrama, Ryan Seacrest, Kurtwood Smith and more

An irreverent sketch show from the minds of actor Seth Green and writer Matthew Senreich, *Robot Chicken* uses a mixture of stop motion animation (of toys, action figures and dolls) and claymation. It's almost impossible to do it justice on paper as it's tough to explain. Picture it as an 11-minute barrage of *Family Guy*-style non-sequiturs and you'll be on the right page. There's something hilarious about watching familiar faves in absurd situations, like Optimus Prime being diagnosed with prostate cancer. Or Aqua Man coming to terms with his inadequacy in a *Real World* house for superheroes. Or Scarecrow from *The Wizard of Oz* being shanked

in prison. Or Walt Disney's cryogenically frozen head being placed on a robotic spider that eats Cuban children. Or Voltron being "served" in an intergalactic B-Boy beatdown. Or Biggie and Tupac meeting again in heaven, and shooting each other. Yes, it's all as odd as it sounds.

VERDICT: Highly unique and hopelessly addictive, we recommend *Robot Chicken* to anyone who enjoys *Family Guy* or *South Park* and for any Gen X or Gen Y alumni who are sick of wading through crap to find something that reminds them of their youth. Not for the kids though. **LR**

★★★★



■ "I'm Chicken Little's BIG brother"

SWIM CLASS

Thanks to Madman we've got five great prize packs featuring these hilarious new titles, *Robot Chicken* Season 1, *Aqua Teen Hunger Force* Season 1 and *Harvey Birdman: Attorney at Law* Season 1. For a chance to win answer the following question, mark your entries 'Adult Swim giveaway' and follow the entry instructions on page 17.

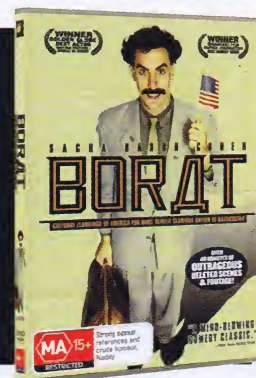
Question:

The Robot Chicken in the credits of *Robot Chicken* is tormented by an evil doctor. Name the evil doctor who tormented Seth Green in one of his films.

VERY NICE!

Want to nab yourself a free copy of *Borat*? Who wouldn't? It's quite possibly one of the funniest films ever made. Thanks to Fox we've got five copies to give away, and each one will come with a *Borat* T-shirt. For a chance to win just answer the following question, mark your entries 'Borat giveaway' and follow the entry instructions on page 17.

Question: What country does Borat come from?



DRAMA

THE GUARDIAN (M)

■ **DIRECTOR:** Andrew Davis

■ **STARRING:** Kevin Costner, Ashton Kutcher



Kev, Kev, Kev, will you never learn? We are, of course, speaking of *Waterworld*. Wouldn't an experience like that give you a tiny aversion to the open sea? Costner should have listened to that little voice, before he made *The Guardian*. After a horrific accident, US Coast Guard Rescue Swimmer Ben Randall (Costner), loses his team, and cajones, and is relegated to instructor at the Coast Guard Academy. Enter Jake Fischer (Kutcher), a talented protégé lacking the tools to be a team player. Through a series of rescue missions, both simulated and real, the two men come to terms with their inadequacies and battle the demons within... gripping stuff... not!

VERDICT: Lets call it what it is, crap, and take away that one star because Costner didn't learn his lesson! **DK**



HORROR

FEAST (R18+)

■ **DIRECTOR:** John Gulager

■ **STARRING:** Balthazar Getty, Henry Rollins, Navi Rawat, Jenny Wade



The third (and apparently the last) Project Greenlight production (an indie-film funding scheme devised by Matt Damon and Ben Affleck) *Feast* is a surprisingly unique horror flick. While it wears its B-movie creature-feature sensibilities proudly on its sleeve, *Feast* throws out the rule-book and, despite starting off with a motley crew of horror movie stereotypes, bucks just about every horror cliché you can think of. Read on if you want an example (stop if you like being surprised) but while it's assumed the hero will live (because... he's the hero), the hero in *Feast* has his head chewed off 30 seconds after he's introduced. Cool.

VERDICT: There's plenty here for gore-hounds, and if you're after a little something different from your shock-horror splatter-fests, check it out. **LR**



COMEDY

THE EDDIE MURPHY RAW COLLECTION (R18+)

■ **DIRECTOR:** Various

■ **STARRING:** Eddie Murphy



PG Eddie Murphy just doesn't cut the mustard. There's a great range of flicks on

offer here, with a taste of classic stand up, some great buddy movies, a little bit of romance and a dash of Soul Glo. We asked Eddie why his newer films tanked... he said his *Best Defence* for *Coming To America* was to spend 48HRS looking for *The Golden Child*, then *Boomerang* back across country for *Another 48HRS* indulging in some *Raw*, *Harlem Nights* and eventually ended up *Trading Places* with *A Vampire From Brooklyn*. We have no idea what he meant. Damn! We forgot to mention our favourite. You know, the one with Jamie Lee Curtis?

VERDICT: Rad value, but where's *Beverly Hills Cop* and *Delirious*? **DK**



ACTION

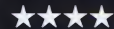
BLOOD DIAMOND (MA15+)

■ **DIRECTOR:** Edward Zwick

■ **STARRING:** Leonardo DiCaprio, Jennifer Connelly, Djimon Hounsou

Set against a backdrop of the chaos and civil war that engulfed Sierra Leone in the late '90s, *Blood Diamond* is the tale of two very different men with the same quest. Solomon Vandy (Djimon Hounsou) is a Mende fisherman taken from his family and forced to work in the diamond mines. When he finds a diamond of incredible value he hides it away, knowing he'll be killed if he's discovered. He knows the diamond would be a ticket to freedom for his refugee wife and daughters and would prevent his son becoming a child soldier. Danny Archer (Leonardo DiCaprio) is an ex-mercenary from Zimbabwe and hears about the stone in prison. He too knows a diamond like this could be his way out of Africa. With the help of an American journalist, Maddy (Jennifer Connelly), they trek deep into rebel territory to recover the diamond together.

VERDICT: The action and the message somewhat cancel each other out, but *Blood Diamond* is a fine flick buoyed by some fantastic performances. **LR**



NEXT MONTH...

Babel
The Good Shepard
A Scanner Darkly
Smokin' Aces
Breaking and Entering
Deja Vu
Flags of our Fathers
American Dad! Season 2
Scrubs Season 5
... and the first reviews of the hottest Blu-ray movies!

AT LAST YEAR'S GOLDEN GLOBES LEONARDO DICAPRIO WAS COMPETING AGAINST HIMSELF AS BEST ACTOR, WITH NODS FOR *THE DEPARTED* AND *BLOOD DIAMOND*. HE LOST TO FOREST WHITAKER FOR *THE LAST KING OF SCOTLAND*

TV

HARVEY BIRDMAN: ATTORNEY AT LAW SEASON ONE (M)

■ **DIRECTOR:** Michael Ouwelen,

Eric Richter

■ **STARRING:** Gary Cole, Stephen Colbert



Remember all of those Hanna-Barbara specials? Well, what if one Harvey Birdman, retired and decided the best way to fight for justice was as an attorney? Be amazed as he defends his fellow heroes and other major cartoon stars from the paranoid cross examination of former archenemy Myron Reducto! Guffaw at the barrage of pop culture references and sexual innuendo. Special mention to the episode with Apache Chief who, after spilling some hot coffee on his lap, sues the cafe, claiming he can no longer use his powers to "grow".

VERDICT: An absurd, silly and ridiculously amusing take on some childhood classics. Brilliant. **DK**



ANIME

BLEACH - VOL 1 (M)

■ **DIRECTOR:** Noriuyke Abe

■ **STARRING:** Masakazu Morita, Fumiko Orikasa, Yuki Matsuoka



Ichigo Kurosaki can see dead people. No, this ain't *The Sixth Sense*, but a tale of a rough high school student caught in the wrong place at the right time. When Ichigo inadvertently interrupts Death God Rukia while she's doing the rounds sending evil possessed lost souls (or "Hollows") to their final resting place he absorbs most of her powers and must battle demonic spirits in her place. Throw in some quirky humour, dynamic action and the pre-requisite oddly kinky schoolgirls with massively inflated chests and this has all the signs of a classic in the making.

VERDICT: It's going gangbusters overseas and we can see why. Definitely on par with *Naruto* and *DBZ* as some of the finest anime Japan has to offer. **DK**



TV

AQUA TEEN HUNGER FORCE SEASON ONE (M)

■ **DIRECTOR:** Mat Maillaro, Dave Willis

■ **STARRING:** Dana Snyder, Carey Means, Dave Willis, Schoolly D



Where do you begin with *Aqua Teen Hunger Force*? Firstly, the name has absolutely nothing to do with anything considering they're not sea dwellers, or teens. They are food items to sate hunger, but a force? C'mon! *ATHF* is a totally off the wall animated comedy. You've got Meatwad, an inferior form of minced meat with amazing morphing abilities, Master Shake, a lazy, psychotic milkshake proficient with firearms and Frylock, a red box of French fries with a goatee, who is a bit of a mad scientist. They fight crime... sort of. The majority of the show is adlibbed, which really gives it an extremely kooky edge.

VERDICT: An acquired taste, but refreshingly nutty. **DK**





■ "Can't believe I put my suit in with a black wash. I'm such an idiot!"

CINEMA

SPIDER-MAN 3 (RATING TBC)

■ **DIRECTOR:** Sam Raimi
■ **STARRING:** Tobey Maguire, Kirsten Dunst, James Franco, Thomas Haden Church

Spider-Man has finally managed to balance his love-life with Mary-Jane and his responsibilities as a superhero, but when his suit suddenly turns black, Peter is transformed as well – and a dark side of his personality is brought to the surface. Forced to choose between the power the new suit imbues him with and the honourable hero he used to be, he must overcome his inner conflict while taking on two of his most deadly nemeses yet – Sandman and Venom. Opens May 3



■ "Did I remember to tip that stripper last night?"

COMING SOON

PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN: AT WORLD'S END

(Rating TBC)

■ **STARRING:** Johnny Depp
The third swashbuckling *Pirates* flick. Opens May 24

BLACK SNAKE MOAN

(Rating TBC)

■ **STARRING:** Christina Ricci
Samuel L. Jackson cures a sexy sex-addict (Ricci. In panties mostly). Opens May 10

ZODIAC

(Rating TBC)

■ **STARRING:** Jake Gyllenhaal
The new thriller from director, David Fincher (*Se7en*, *Fight Club*) about a serial killer known as the Zodiac and his San Francisco killing spree. Opens May 17

GRINDHOUSE

(Rating TBC)

■ **STARRING:** Kurt Russell
From Quentin Tarantino and Robert Rodriguez, *Grindhouse* is a double bill of thrillers that recall both filmmakers' fave B-movies. Opens May 31

BUZZ

The latest movie murmurs from home and abroad



CASHING IN

Casino Royale on Blu-ray Disc has hit the 100,000 units shipped mark. Since the November launch of PlayStation 3 in Japan

and the US, sales of Blu-ray titles have risen exponentially by more than 700 percent.

"Blu-ray has accounted for approximately 70 percent of the high-definition market since the first week in January, and as that market share continues to grow, we are dedicated to providing consumers with the content they crave," said Sony Pictures Home Entertainment Worldwide President, David Bishop.



SINNERS

Rumour has it Johnny Depp and Antonio Banderas are two names floating around as additions to the cast of *Sin City 2*. The two

stars, both of whom director Robert Rodriguez has worked with in the past, have reportedly expressed interest in being part of the project, according to an MTV interview with Rodriguez.



MUMMY'S BOY

Word is Jet Li is in talks to join the cast of *The Mummy 3* for Universal Pictures. Li appears to be slated to play the

lead villain in the Rob Cohen directed jaunt. Plot details are scant, but the film will kick off in ancient China before moving to a post-WWII setting.



THE GOOD GERMANS

Tom Cruise will star in director Bryan Singer's (*Superman Returns*) upcoming untitled WWII thriller. The film

will be based on actual events as German generals hatch an assassination plot to liquidate Hitler at the height of WWII and has been penned by Chris McQuarrie and Nathan Alexander. It's the first original project teaming Singer and McQuarrie since *The Usual Suspects*.



SUPER SEQUEL

Speaking of Singer, work on the sequel to *Superman Returns* is continuing and filming will probably begin

March 2008. Maybe Superman will hit someone in this one.

ULTIMATE PS3 GADGETS

This month we play-test the new Sony Walkman

NW-A800 WALKMAN

■ PRICE: TBC
■ WEB: www.sony.com.au

Sony's long-awaited Video Walkman is the iPod Nano's worst nightmare. It's aimed squarely at Apple's backside. Incredibly slim, it reproduces movie classics in eye-popping, retina-frying resolution. Its two-inch QVGA screen is sharp, crisp, bright and it brings Hollywood's finest to magnificently vivid life. Battery life is nothing short of marathon. One juicing gives you enough for around two films back-to-back, or 25 hours of music.



CANON TX1

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■ WEB: www.canon.com.au

This hi-tech beauty is the lovechild of the IXUS and the HV10 camcorders. The TX1 takes 7.1-megapixel snaps, plus shoots 720p video at 30 frames per second. Face detect, 10x optical zoom and image stabilising are also part of this device's DNA.

BLACKBIRD RIDER

■ PRICE: \$2,000
■ WEB: www.blackbirdguitars.com

This futuristic looking acoustic guitar is forged from carbon fibre – the material of choice of Formula 1 gurus. The Blackbird Rider is a third smaller than a regular wooden guitar and super light thanks to its hollow body and neck. The fretboard is the same length as a regular axe but the body is shorter and the soundscoop is stuck on the shoulder. It's time to go axe to the future.

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RESISTANCE

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■ "I've already hit 17. Looks like it's your shout for the space beers again, Ker-quig-ulk"



BRISTOL

1 Devil At The Door

Don't worry about the mechs in the opening scene. Just hang back for a minute and they'll head off. Use your Bullseye tags to take out the Hybrids. Take it slowly when you leave this area via the path in the back right. There are a lot of Hedgehog mines but you can duck behind each of the barricades to avoid them. After the Hedgehog mines rely on your Bullseye again to take out the Howlers. A good tag on the face and the majority of your clip will drop them.

In the next area there's a good stash of ammo in the bunker so stock up and prepare for the Titan. Continue peppering him with grenade launcher shots from your Carbine as well as regular grenades. These should distract him from building up his explosive shots. When the flames on his gun turn yellow that means he's about to fire so strafe to the side urgently.

Once you pass through the gate there are a number of sonic mines on the left leading to some ammo for your Hailstorm and Shotgun (as well as some health). Jump the low mines and duck under the high ones to collect the ammo if needed, otherwise continue on.

In the next section there are a stack more Hedgehog mines. Equip your Auger and use its shield to protect you if needed but you should be able to avoid most of them by sticking to the right of the metal barricades. There are also a handful of sonic mines towards the end.

As you make your way to the hill overlooking the battle below there are loads of Fareye rounds so snipe away at will until all are dead, especially the Steelhead who lurks beyond the far building. Once everyone's wasted you can charge towards the jeep. There will be a few Hybrids that continue to rush the jeep but they can easily be dodged to trigger the end of the level.

2 Evacuation

Equip your Fareye as you walk through the first door and use its slo-mo secondary fire to nail the three nimble Slipskulls. Switch to the shotgun as you descend the stairs and have a grenade ready for the Steelhead at the bottom. Nick around to the right and shoot the Leapers eating the corpse and pick up Intel Document #23.



Intel Document #23

The next couple of rooms are pretty straightforward. There are a couple of boxes of grenades in the kitchen so feel free to toss them about liberally. When you ride the elevator down get ready for a fight with a Titan.



Keep moving when facing Titans

Whip out your Hailstorm and use the secondary fire to leave a turret nailing him. Run for cover and toss a few grenades at him. A second Hailstorm turret should finish him off.

After the Titan there are a whole squad of Hybrids scattered around the

large hangar. Taking them out isn't too hard as there's a stack of Fareye and other ammo littered around. Use cover well and pick them off slowly. When you take out the final handful at the far end (running the turrets) the plane will fly off and you can leave the area. Before you do, head back to the first large pillar and walk down the ramp around it to collect Intel Document #24.



Intel Document #24

Ride the elevator up (it's near the gun turrets). Your Fareye will be your best friend in the circular lecture theatre. Equip a Shotgun or Carbine as you're leaving the room to cut through the Leapers. A couple of well-placed grenades and Shotgun blasts will take care of the Hybrids in the next few rooms. After them you will see a red-lit room with Intel Document #25 on the ground.



Intel Document #25

Whip out your Fareye and use this room as cover while you snipe the Slipskulls

and Steelheads. Try to kill them before they kill your soldier buddies. Once the Steelheads are dead equip the Hailstorm and the Air-Fuel grenades. Throw one grenade up the stairs as soon as you first see a Hybrid, then mop up the rest with the Hailstorm. Use your Shotgun and a few more Air-Fuel grenades to kill the enemies in the remaining few rooms.

3 Parting Ways

Saddle up for one of the easiest missions in the game. You get to spend the entire time in one of the Chimeran mechs. So long as you hang back you can pretty much complete the entire level in safety, without needing to move much at all. Use **R** to fire your rockets. These will fire up into the air and then shoot a secondary rocket towards your crosshair. Use these rockets to keep hammering away at the three Titans until they are dead. Next up the only other thing you need to do is shoot the three gun turrets. Blow these up and you will have easily completed this total cake walk of a mission.

BRACKNELL

1 Into The Depths

Hopefully you enjoyed the previous easy level because the difficulty spikes quite a bit for this next mission in the tunnels. The Menials are easily taken out with some melee attacks but the groups of Leaper eggs in the next few rooms are quite tricky. There are some Hedgehog grenades in the second room so don't be afraid to throw these and other grenades into the Leaper eggs before they burst. If you do not destroy them before they burst make sure you retreat quickly once they start shaking. The Leapers will jump a couple of metres straight at you when they hatch, so be prepared. Make sure you collect Intel Document #26 from the batch of eggs to the right.



Intel Document #26

In the next room there will be a handful of Menials to dispose of. Be ready when you kill the last one because a handful of Grey Jacks will attack. You can either lay a Sapper trap for them by retreating and letting them run into it, or you can use the stopping power of the Shotgun.

Either way you need to stay on guard once they are dead, because a handful of Steelheads will attack at the far side of the room. Their Augers mean that taking cover and killing them slowly is not an option. You will either need to hit them quickly with some Fareye rounds or charge them and kill them with grenades and Shotgun blasts.

After a quick run through a passage you'll come to a large round room. As you can probably gather from all the ammo and health on the floor, this room is a trap waiting to be sprung on you. When you jump down you will need to collect as much ammo and health as possible and prepare for the rush of enemies. Use a mixture of Carbine grenade launcher rounds and Fareye sniping to take out the large groups of enemies and the Shotgun for the Grey Jacks. Keep moving and make sure you collect any leftover health in between enemy waves. Once everyone's dead you can collect Intel Document #27 and exit through the now open door.

You'll drop down some circular tunnels in the next area that are filled with swarms of Leapers. Use a mixture of Bullseye fire and grenades to make short work of them.

You'll come out into a large area with long pipes that you can walk along. There's a good stash of Fareye ammo

at the start. Use it to plug the three Slipskulls leaping about at the far side of the room. Head back and fill your Fareye ammo again before continuing.

When you've climbed up the pipes and out of this area you'll see a few Menials carrying power cells. Shoot the hell out of the power cells to trigger a chain reaction to kill most of the enemies. At the far end of this area you will see Intel Document #28 that you can jump down to. Unfortunately there's no way to jump back up so you'll have to sacrifice a life to collect it.

Once you're done take the tunnel and continue on. You'll soon encounter another group of Menials and a Steelhead. Use Fareye to take the big guy out, then mop up the rest.

2 In A Darker Place

This mission starts off with a bang. You'll find about 20 Menials staggering towards you.



It's time to make a Menial carpet

Use the Shotgun and grenades (there are a few boxes on the ground) to take them out, then flick to the Fareye for the Hybrids. Don't waste the LAARK rocket launcher on any of these smallfries. Head up the elevator when you're done.

Unfortunately things don't get much better in the next few rooms. There are plenty of Steelheads and you'll probably be getting low on Fareye ammo. When you run out use grenades and even your LAARK if you get desperate.

In the next area you will see a couple of Hybrids patrolling below. Tag them with Bullseye tags and take them out easily. Use the same technique on the

Grey Jacks from a good distance away. When the area has been mopped up look for the two switches.



One of two switches you need

After pressing both have your LAARK out and shoot four rockets into the mech quickly. After this, use an Auger shield to protect you while you fire Auger rounds into the mech's body. A couple of shots will finish it off. You can try to get around behind it and take it out with less ammo but it's a lot harder that way (and there's plenty of LAARK ammo nearby). Walk up to the mech remains to end the mission.

LONDON

1 A Desperate Gamble

You're not in immediate danger in this mission so you can explore the rooms and smash the grate with a melee attack to reveal a passage leading to Intel Document #29. When you're ready approach the archway in the far corner. Use the Sapper to lay a trap near the cart here because you will be attacked by a storm of Leapers and a Steelhead.



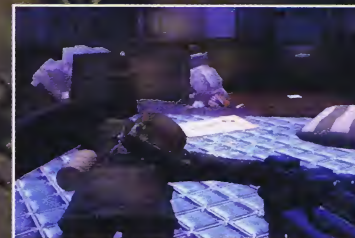
Cap the saps with a Sapper trap

In the next area proceed carefully until

you hear the enemies coming then run like hell back into the first area and use it as cover. Some enemies will follow you so ambush them with a shotgun. Use Fareye and Bullseye to take out the rest from safety.

Check each room as you progress as there's plenty of health and ammo scattered around. Eventually you will make your way to the second level and out into the snow.

There should be more than enough ammo and health out on the snow to let you defeat the handful of Leapers and Hybrids before you head down into the snowy tunnel. This leads to the inside of an apartment block where you'll see Intel Document #30 in the first room on the right.



Intel Document #30

You'll need to proceed cautiously after collecting the Intel as there's an ambush in the next room. Retreat when they appear. You'll find another trap waiting to be sprung in the main room with the staircase. Keep retreating to the previous rooms and make use of the Fareye and Bullseye. Once you've completed this room it's a safe walk out to complete the mission.

2 Ice And Iron

This mission is a hell of a lot of fun and it's not too hard either thanks to the fact that you get to spend most of the time inside a tank. Things start off tricky with a mech to defeat. There's a lot of health around which you should take advantage of, as well as a box of grenades and a grenade launcher round for your Carbine. Use the shacks as cover as you circle around it. Hammer

■ "I love sucker punching these stupid surrendering humans"





every rocket you have into it, then finish it off with grenades and Auger rounds.

The Titan who comes next shouldn't be too much trouble, use Auger shields and whatever heavy weapons you have. Now it's time to get in the tank.



⚡ Mech vs. Tank? No contest!

When you're in the tank you can survive everything the enemies toss at you without worrying so long as you keep your distance and don't waste time. Use your tank's incredible range (don't bother with the machine gun and just focus on the cannon) and you'll be fine.

When you get to the bridge the game will boot you out of your tank. There's Intel Document #31 inside the building. It's in the second room on the right.

There's an ambush on the second floor but just retreat into the room on your left and use your Sapper to cover both doorways. Proceed up and out of the building to finish the mission.

THAMES

1 Burning Bridges

Welcome to the toughest section in the entire game. You will have about 20 Hybrids, two mechs and one Widowmaker to take out. The most important thing to know is where all of the LAARK ammo is, as you'll need lots of rockets. There are four rockets in each of the two houses and two more boxes in the middle of the area. There are also plenty of Fareye ammo boxes in the houses so feel free to stick to the Fareye whenever you're attacking Hybrids.

Run into the first house on the right, collect the ammo here and snipe some Hybrids. When the mech comes out use

a combination of rockets and Auger 'shield and shoot' tactics. When the first mech is dead run out of the house, through the ruins in the middle to pick up LAARK ammo and then collect another box next to the tree. Now run into the far house and use this as your final base of operations.

Snipe some of the enemies and then use the same tactics to take out the second mech. When taking on the Widowmaker do not try to use Auger shields to protect you from its Sapper rounds as they pass right through it. Fire at it with rockets and Auger rounds and run like hell whenever it aims at you as its Sapper rounds are very damaging. When you've killed the Widowmaker you will finally have cleared the area.



⚡ Look for the Laark ammo

Exit the area by heading through the brick arch on the left. Take the path through the snow immediately on the left of the arch and you will come to a road. When you get to two laser drones that leap up out of the ground, look to your right and you will see a mound of rubble between buildings. On it is Intel Document #32.



⚡ Intel Document #32

Backtrack to the arch and continue on. You will face a tough battle on the rooftops next. There is health on the roof and down below on the right if needed. When you get to the Steelheads switch to the Fareye to take them out.

When you get to the Grey Jack continue on down the alley and collect Intel Document #33. Up on the roof you'll be involved in some more Fareye antics but after that it's a pretty easy journey to the end of the mission down on the street.

2 On The Ice

This mission starts off tough and doesn't get any easier. Stay in the tunnel and use it for cover. Some Sapper rounds will come in handy for the Leapers in the room on the right too.



⚡ Use this tunnel for cover

The next really tough bit comes at the second train room. Retreat as soon as the enemies start coming out. Pepper them with grenades and use Fareye for the Slipskulls.

After the train you move out into a snowstorm on the frozen Thames river. There isn't too much to worry about on the river because there's plenty of health lying about, but make sure to collect Intel Document #34 from near the burning metal wreckage.

3 Giant Slayer

After the last mission, this one will come as a relief. You get to spend almost all of it in vehicles so it's not too tough. At the start you'll be in a jeep. The key to this section is to just keep circling the mech and not let it get a bead on you.



⚡ Keep circling the mech

Kill the first wave of Hybrids then enter the tunnel. At the end of the tunnel you'll get into a mech. Keep hammering both machine guns and missiles while staying on the move to defeat the super mech you tackle in the snow. After this it's a simple matter of taking out the remaining mechs and Hybrids in the final section. When they're dead you'll have to abandon the mech and continue on foot.



⚡ Exit your mech before it blows

For the final part of this mission it's a showdown with a Widowmaker. Hit it with all of your LAARK and Auger ammo and keep strafing its attacks until you can drop it.

CHIMERAN TOWER

1 Angel's Lair

At the bottom of the first big ramp you'll find a stack of LAARK ammo so don't be afraid to use it on the advancing Hybrids. Use your new Bullseye and the Fareye to take out the rest of them. There are also some more Air-Fuel grenades up the top of the ramp so lob some of these in too. At the top of the ramp you'll find a door switch and a stack of ammo.

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⚡ The switch is cunningly hidden - NOT

On the next ramp you'll encounter your first Angel. She looks tough but locking onto her with the new Bullseye and emptying a clip into her will be more than sufficient to send this angel to hell.

Wipe out the horde of Menials in the next room and advance up the ramp. You'll have to take on two Steelheads but you can use rockets on them for an easy kill. Before you've gone more than a few metres up this ramp, take another ramp on the left down below this main ramp and collect some LAARK ammo and Intel Document #35.



⚡ Intel Document #35

This also happens to be a bugger of a checkpoint because it's ages before you get to the next one. After the elevator ride, you'll come to a tunnel. As soon as you get to the health, turn around and run back the way you came with your Shotgun drawn to take out the sneaky bugger behind you. Now you can worry about the other blokes waiting further ahead in the tunnel.

In the next room the Auger works well on the Hybrids hiding behind the columns. You can also use some Hedgehog grenades here as there are six at the far end of the room.



⚡ Don't miss the Hedgehog grenades

In the next room the Fareye is your best friend and there's also plenty of ammo for it in the middle. When you get to the next elevator you will have finally cleared the checkpoint.

After that prick of a checkpoint the next is surprisingly easy. They must be buttering you up for the final mission. Go nuts with your Fareye and LAARK and

you'll be finished in no time.

2 Last Hope

Thankfully it's a pretty easy early section for the last level. There's a wealth of ammo in each room (which should give you a hint about which weapon to use). Make sure you grab Intel Document #36 which is beside the glowing wall in the second room. There's also some health in here and behind the rest of the other walls as well.



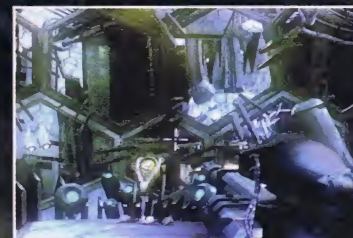
⚡ Intel Document #36

In the next section you'll encounter a stack of Steelheads but there's more than enough Fareye ammo so it's quite easy. After this you will go up against another Angel. Again there is so much LAARK and Fareye ammo that you shouldn't have anything to worry about.

Stock up on ammo then head into the tunnel. When you get to the Slipskulls be sure to collect the game's final Intel Document (#37).

The last battle is epic but there's also a good deal of ammo and health about

the place. Take out the two Titans with four rockets each and a few grenades. Keep using the grenades for the next couple of groups of enemies as you make your way around to the switch to open up the core.



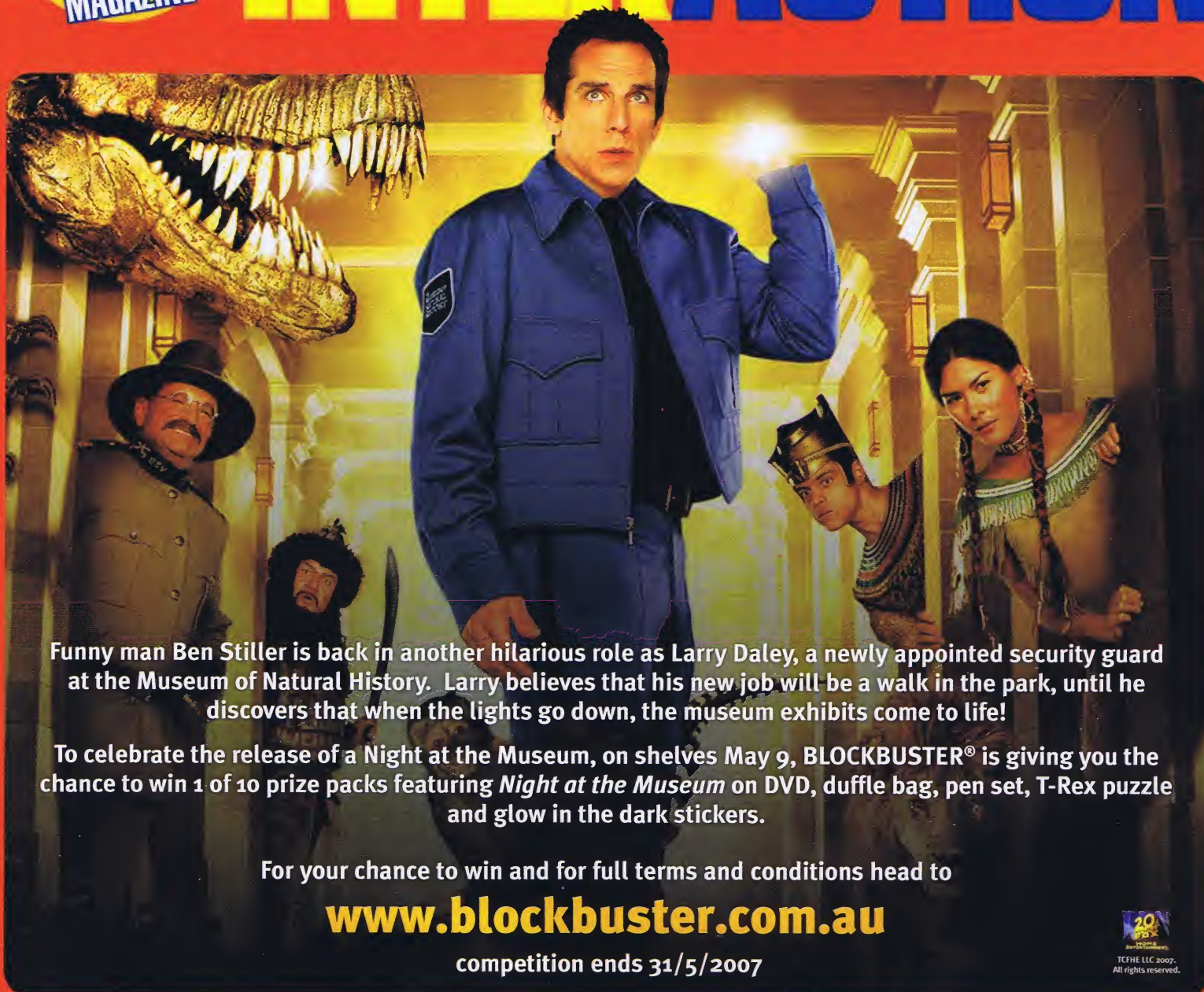
⚡ Open the core with this switch

When the blast shields are open fire at the glowing orange pillars. It takes a while for all four to open up but once you've shot them all it's game over, man. Enjoy the credits and get ready to take your skills online against other *Resistance* veterans. 🎮

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INTERACTION



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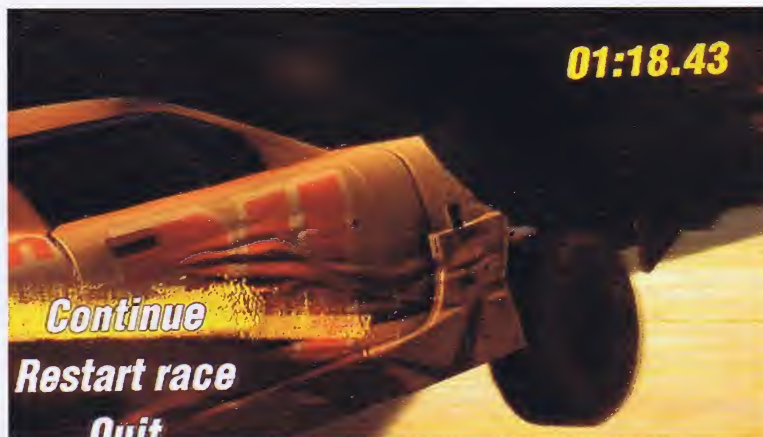
Do you play a game once from start to finish, shelve it and move on to the next? Tsk tsk, dear reader. You're really not getting enough bang for your buck. Which is why we created the Re-Play section, to delve back into your collection and challenge you to do and see things you may have missed on your first play through. Each month we're going to set records for you to break, expose cheats for you to try and uncover secrets for you to seek out. We also want you to participate by setting challenges for other readers to attempt or sending in funny screenshots from your latest gaming session. We also do requests, so if there's a particular game you want us to crack wide open, let us know. Email us at ops@derwenthoward.com.au or snail mail us at OPS Re-Play, PO Box 1037, Bondi Junction, NSW, 1355.



OFFICIAL CHALLENGE

MOTORSTORM

MotorStorm is one of, if not the best launch titles for the PS3, and the main reason why we don't get any work done, so we decided that we would set a huge lap time for you to try and beat, all in the name of work. Here is the challenge: head to The Grizzly and select an all class race, choose your vehicle (we recommend the rally car) and try and get the fastest lap possible. Bear in mind that only your first lap can be used. Pause the game, take a pic and send it in to us; Narayan set a ball busting time of 1:18.47. We reckon you can easily shave a couple of seconds off that, and you'll have to if you want any chance of winning game of the month.



OFFICIAL CHALLENGE

LOCOROCO

Damn those stupid *LocoRoco* blobs. Just squashing around, looking harmless, singing annoyingly catchy songs that slowly drive you to insanity. Do they think it's cute that they slowly get bigger and fatter throughout each level until they reach a ridiculously huge gurning yellow mass? Are we supposed to smile and giggle at this whole charade, losing every single aspect of our manliness to these infernal, perennially grinning goons? Is this

our fate? We think so. Yes, you may tell all your mates that this game bites balls, but the truth is you love it. Here is our challenge; simple but cruel. Attempt to get through the very first level on the first world of *LocoRoco*, as quickly as possible. Just a little tip: it's actually better to try and avoid picking up stray *LocoRoco*. Trying to move a ridiculously enormous blob quickly is damn near impossible. We gave it a bash and did it in 1:07.60; beat that mutha-truckaaas!



READER CHALLENGES

**UNDER
CONSTRUCTION**

We want your challenges! Whether you've set an awesome lap time in *MotorStorm*, or you've pulled off an incredible insane stunt in *GTA: Vice City Stories*, we want to hear about it. To throw down the gauntlet to your fellow OPS readers, check out the address details under the 'What is Re-Play' section at the top of this page and send in today! We'll print your challenges in these very pages!

CAUGHT ON CAMERA


Seen something funny in a game? Send it in!



METAL GEAR SOLID 2

Yes we all know that Raiden prefers the tradesman's entrance, is about as straight as Waylon Smithers, and would run a country mile if he ever came face to face with a set of mammoth meat eaters, but we want you to indulge in your natural love of funbags with this challenge. *MGS2* is notorious for hanging posters of gorgeous chicks everywhere in the gaming environment, those badboys are everywhere, on the walls, in lockers, well that's about it really, but we're not complaining. We'd like you to use the game's unlockable camera and take the best picture of a set of knockers you can find and send it to us pronto. Much appreciated chaps; that should keep us busy during our lunch break.

OKAMI

We all know how awesome *Okami* is, but bloody hell does it have some long ass loading screens. At least the game allows you to bash the buttons in frustration, creating a bunch of paws on the screen. But what the hell is the point of that I hear you ask? Well actually...if you press the  button hard enough, for long enough, something actually will happen. After you pretty much cover the screen in 'cute' little paw prints a red graphic will pop up; if that happens you now have access to the demon fangs, which are pretty damn useful in the course of the game.



FIGHT NIGHT ROUND 3



In issue #1 of *OPS* we had a pretty satisfying picture of that annoying wank-bag Kyle Sandilands, from *Australian Idol*, receiving a delicious right hook to the jaw. That made us happy, very happy. In fact we would like to see more of this kind of tomfoolery, so we'd like you guys to bust out the create-a-player mode

in *Fight Night Round 3* and give us some more 'celebrity' action. If anyone is up for it we would like to see Harold Bishop vs. Bert Newton in an old fashioned fisticuffs bout to the death. Can Harold 'Jelly Belly' Bishop take out Bert 'The Wigmaster' Newton? Other celebrity bouts we'd love to see? Britney Spears (bald) vs.

Kevin Federline (knob), Tom Cruise vs. Brooke Shields, Michael Jackson vs. Michael Moore. Ah... just surprise us! If you can use your create-a-player skills to make any of these dream contests happen please send a quality pic to us, we'll put the best in a future issue for your viewing pleasure. Get cracking.

GOD OF PHWOAAAR...

Us 'studs' at *OPS*, and Kratos from *God of War* have a lot in common. We are both men of action, and we both get it 'done' in the bedroom. Sadly, we have no evidence of our own mad skillz with the ladies, but a good example of Kratos's sexual prowess can be found in *God of War II*. You'll have to keep your eyes peeled to find it, however...



Hang on a minute? An obscurely placed curtain-divider in the middle of a war-zone, that can't be right. Lets have a little peek shall we?



Sweet mother of jeebus, what's all this then? Put some clothes on woman, you'll put an eye out with those things. Well actually, on second thoughts... let me just slip out of this loincloth.



(Cue Marvin Gaye music, and tasteful camera angle) What more can we say really; it's Kratos, with two naked woman, making the beast with two backs, showing us all how it's done. Thanks buddy.

CHEATS

Get the winning edge
with *OPS*' tricky cheats

PS3 PS2 PSP

NEED FOR SPEED CARBON



Go to the main menu and input these codes:

10K Booster

↓, ↑, ←, ↓, →, ↑, ⊙, ⊙

Infinite crew charge

↓, ↑, ↑, →, ←, ←, →, ⊙

Infinite nitrous

←, ↑, ←, ↓, ←, ↓, →, ⊙

Infinite SpeedBreaker

↓, →, →, ←, →, ↑, ↓, ⊙

Unlock Logo Vinyls

→, ↑, ↓, ↑, ↓, ←, →, ⊙

Unlock Special Logo Vinyls

↑, ↑, ↓, ↓, ↓, ↓, ↑, ⊙

PS3 PS2 PSP

NBA STREET HOMECOURT

Go to the main menu and press **□** + **□** before you enter the codes. You'll need to re-enter the codes every time you turn the game on.

Unlock all courts

↑, →, ↓, ←

Unlock all teams

←, →, ←, →

New York All-Stars

Defeat the New York Knicks in a GB Battle

Oakland All-Stars

Defeat the Golden State Warriors in a Trick Battle.

Chicago All-Stars

Beat the Chicago Bulls in a Back To Basics game

Detroit All-Stars

Defeat the Detroit Pistons in a GB Battle.

Jordan 9.5 Team

Win five Back To Basics games

Brand Jordan Outfit 4

Get 10 steals in a game

Brand Jordan Outfit 2

Get 10 blocks in a game

Los Angeles All-Stars

Defeat the Los Angeles Lakers in a Pick Up game

New Jersey All-Stars

Defeat the New Jersey Nets in a Trick Battle



PS3 PS2 PSP

BLAZING ANGELS: SQUADRONS OF WWII

All campaign missions and planes

At the main menu, hold **□** + **□** and quickly press **⊙**, **□**, **□**, **△**(x2), **□**, **□**, **⊙** to unlock all campaign missions and planes.

Invincibility

Pause the game, then hold **□** and quickly press **⊙**, **△**(x2), **⊙**. Then, hold **□** and quickly press **△**, **⊙**(x2), **△**. Repeat the code to disable its effect.

Increased damage by weapons

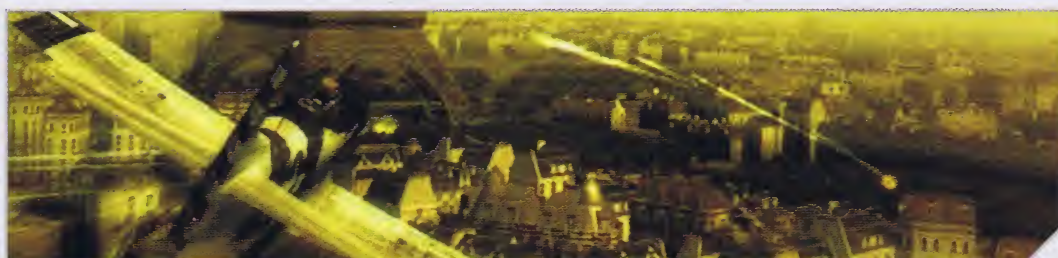
Pause the game, then hold **□** and quickly press **□**(x2), **□**. Then, hold **□** and quickly press **□**(x2), **□**. Repeat the code to disable its effect.

Ace Killer

Defeat all the other Aces to unlock Ace Killer.

Ace Of Aces

Get the highest score in all campaign missions to unlock Ace Of Aces.



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GAMES



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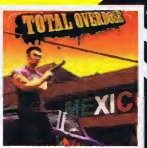
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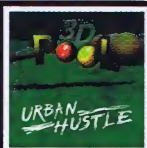
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170158



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Sweet Escape	173239	171941
How To Save A Life	173701	173712
This Ain't A Scene Its An Arms Race	173750	173755
Welcome To The Black Parade	173304	173328
Say It Right	173642	173373
I Wanna Love You	173698	173709
Rock This Party	173314	173320
Suddenly I See	178773	177746
Hit Me Up	173766	171938
Put Your Hands Up For Detroit	173345	173352
Fergalicious	173586	173590
Light Surrounding You	173337	171813
Smaek That	173450	173459
Tell Me	173598	173608
Wait A Minute	173796	173801
Irreplaceable	173335	173342
Don't Give Up	173599	171891
Something About You	173264	173270

FAVOURITES TRUE MP3 POLY

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BYOB	177030	173012
Killing In The Name Of	178940	177823
Another Brick In The Wall	178920	177911
Welcome To The Jungle	178710	177707
Gangstas Paradise	178617	177590
Insane In The Brain	178623	177598
No Woman No Cry	178558	177531
Fight For Your Right To Party	178530	173790
The Real Slim Shady	178666	177681
Cant Touch This	178824	177761
Drop It Like Its Hot	178998	177995
Born Slippy	177254	177896

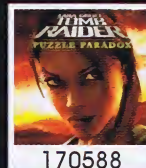
TALKING TONES REAL

Scarface - Say Hello To My Little Friend	177924
The Shining - Heres Johnny!	177925
Paddy - Ding Dang Doo	173612
Stifler - Stiflers Back Baby	173610
Foghorn Leghorn	177359
Best Of Little Britain	173623
Darth Vader	177300
Pulp Fiction - Path Of The Righteous Man	178051
Donald Duck Getting A BJ (Hilarious)	178056
Police - Come Out With Your Hands Up	178118
M16 Rifle	178114
Full Metal Jacket - 'You're SO UGLY'	178124
Dukes Of Hazzard - General Lee	178135
The Godfather	177304
Forrest Gump	177303
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Aliens - Game Over Man	177921
Happy Gilmore - Go Home Ball	177923

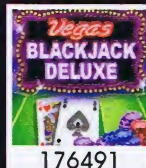
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PORN MANAGER

FEATURE GAME



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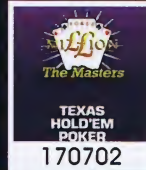
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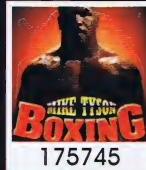
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ARCHIVE

All the games that matter on the PS3, PS2 and PSP!

PS3

FUTURE WATCH

The PS3 games to grab in the coming months

BURNOUT 5

Release: June

The arrival of *Burnout Dominator* on PS2 and PSP offered temporary relief, but in the end it's only made the wait all the more unbearable! *Burnout 5* will feature an entirely open city, ridiculous levels of car-on-car carnage and ought to reinvent the series.



HEAVENLY SWORD

Release: Mid 2007 (TBC)

Imagine if *God of War's* Kratos swapped his loincloth clobber and sculpted goatee for a pair of white cotton pants and a toga. Awkward? Now imagine him with sodding great big boobies and red hair. Still weird? What if he was a woman? Better? That's *Heavenly Sword* – a slash 'em up of DD proportions that could leave *God of War* as the God of Bore.



HALF-LIFE 2: ORANGE

Release: June

Half-Life 2. It's one of those games. Mention it to a PC crowd and they'll shudder in silent reverence before scratching their beards and going back to moaning about living with mum. On PS3 *Half-Life 2* will come with hours of extra singleplayer missions and multiplayer modes.



BROTHERS IN ARMS: HELL'S HIGHWAY

Release: Mid 2007 (TBC)

Hell's Highway is set to be the most authentic WWII game ever made, promising astonishing depth and painstaking tactical detail, all running on the beautiful Unreal Engine 3.



MOTORSTORM



"Fast, hard, dirty and at times utterly exhilarating."

PlayStation
GOLD AWARD
10/10

WHY GET IT?

- It's the best racing game ever, hands down.
- It's liquid sex drizzling into your eyeballs.
- Amazing *Burnout*-trumping crashes!
- Non-racing fans love it too.

OFFICIAL
SCORE:
10

VERDICT: *MotorStorm* is utterly essential to everyone's PS3 libraries. Wow... just wow.

BLAZING ANGELS: SQUADRONS OF WWII

Score: 7

It's not without its flaws but if you want a whiff of the air up there you could do a lot worse.

CALL OF DUTY 3

Score: 7

Call of Duty 3 is a solid but surprisingly unspectacular shooter. Grab a copy of *Resistance* instead.

FIGHT NIGHT ROUND 3

Score: 8

Still one of the best two-player games around, with visuals that will knock the wind out of you.

FORMULA ONE CHAMPIONSHIP EDITION

Score: 9

F1CE looks awesome and plays just as well. F1 fans, you have been called.

MARVEL: ULTIMATE ALLIANCE

Score: 9

It's next gen as all hell. On PS2 it was damn good – on PS3 it's a must-have!

NBA 2K7

Score: 8

Technically the best b-ball sim on the street, but that won't mean much to average punters.

NBA STREET HOMECOURT

Score: 8

Homecourt is the brash, most addictive basketball game yet. Instant fun.

NEED FOR SPEED CARBON

Score: 8

A bit more Paul Walker than Vin Diesel, but still a solid racer and worth a look for series fans.

NHL 2K7

Score: 8

A snappy hockey game with everything a fan could want, unless you already own the PS2 version.

RESISTANCE: FALL OF MAN

Score: 10

The perfect launch title for PS3, and possibly the best console FPS ever made.

RIDGE RACER 7

Score: 9

Faster, sexier and more gravity defying than Jessica Alba bungee jumping. The best *Ridge Racer* yet!

TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 07

Score: 9

A solid step forward for the best golf franchise in gaming. Tiger's never looked so good!

VIRTUA FIGHTER 5

Score: 8

VF5 is as hardcore as fighting games get. Serious fans – start rolling up your sleeves.

VIRTUA TENNIS 3

Score: 8

Still the best tennis game around, but the lack of any significant new features is a downer.

PS2



CALL OF DUTY 3 Score: 9

Another jewel in the COD crown. One of the PS2's best first-person shooters.

CANIS CANEM EDIT Score: 9

The game formerly known as *Bully* is more fun than having Jack Black as your substitute teacher. Sound the bell – school's in, suckers!

FINAL FANTASY XII Score: 10

This is the most superbly crafted RPG out there. You'd be completely mad to miss this one.

GUITAR HERO II Score: 10

Guitar Hero II is arguably the greatest PS2 game of 2006, and undoubtedly the gnarliest music game ever made.

JUSTICE LEAGUE HEROES Score: 8

JLH doesn't offer as much brawling fun as *Marvel: Ultimate Alliance* but it's a more considered package on the whole.

NEED FOR SPEED CARBON Score: 8

A few faults mar an otherwise impressive racer that'll rev the engines of *Need for Speed* fans everywhere.

OKAMI Score: 9

Don't let this cult classic in the making pass you by. Absolutely mesmerising.

SCARFACE: THE WORLD IS YOURS Score: 8

Scarface is close to being a ripper of a game. Its lack of imagination and innovation hold it back slightly.

SPLINTER CELL: DOUBLE AGENT Score: 9

Sam Fisher's latest is smart, pretty and it'll keep you up all night. Pretty much how we like our women too.

WWE SMACKDOWN! VS. RAW 07 Score: 8

While not revolutionary, *SVR2007* is without a shadow of a doubt, the best wrestling game yet.

PSP

DUNGEON SIEGE Score: 8

Long live the new king of action RPGs.

GRAND THEFT AUTO: VICE CITY STORIES Score: 10

Not only is this a brilliant game, it's arguably the second best GTA game available next to *San Andreas*. Get it now.

GUN: SHOWDOWN Score: 8

A damn good port of its PS2 big brother, with plenty of multiplayer extras to boot!

KILLZONE: LIBERATION Score: 7

Serves up some solid action, though a little repetitive at times. Multiplayer is a blast.

LUMINES II Score: 8

Updated skins and music, but still the same old *Lumines* we know and love.

METAL GEAR SOLID: PORTABLE OPS Score: 9

Forget *Ac'd*, this is the game *Metal Gear* fans have been waiting for.

PRINCE OF PERSIA: RIVAL SWORDS Score: 9

A top-rate conversion that stands up to its PS2 big brother. Fit for a king. Or at least a prince.

PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 6 Score: 8

Fun, easy to play and challenging enough to offer real longevity. Is there anything this series can't do?

V8 SUPERCARS 3: SHOOTOUT Score: 7

It looks good, it sounds good and it has a stack of options – but the handling is more arcade than sim.



MAGIC MOMENTS

Great moments in PlayStation history remembered!



THE GAME: Medal of Honor: Frontline
THE CONSOLE: PlayStation 2

THE YEAR: 2002

THE MOMENT: "And when he gets to heaven, to St. Peter he will tell: 'One more soldier reporting, sir – I've served my time in hell.' Such was the introduction to what's still regarded by many as the finest opening moments of any videogame, ever."

We had been wowed by the intensity of the Omaha Beach scene in *Saving Private Ryan*, but we didn't expect we would ever BE there.

Medal of Honor: Frontline changed that.

Frontline put you in the landing craft with a dozen very frightened young soldiers, ankle deep in sloshing salt water and vomit, hounded by artillery shells ploughing into the ocean on all sides. It put you in the water where your comrades were struggling to unfasten their webbing lest it drag them under, bullets leaving bubbling trails as they whipped through the waves. It put you on the beach, hunkered down behind a jagged anti-tank obstacle and directly beneath a German gun emplacement, lead hissing past your helmet. Atmosphere like this was unheard of in a first-person shooter. The wails of your fellow soldiers, the rumble of explosions, the bark of your own rifle and the metallic ring of the en bloc clip being ejected.

BLAT! BLAT! BLAT! BLAT! CHING!

This was war at its worst. And its best.

After dicking about on the beach for bit you needed to find an engineer and escort him to the sea wall where he'd toss a bangalore into the barbed wire, shredding it. After a mad dash to the defilade on the other side you then had to sprint across a minefield, flush out a trench and subsequently clear an entire bunker single-handed. The pay-off? You'd be able to watch the navy shell the shit out of the opposite fort before bugging off for a sandwich.

World War II shooters are so prolific these days they've cornered their own sub-genre of the market but *Frontline*, and its rarely equalled opening minutes, set the bar.

NEXT

WORLD EXCLUSIVE!



OPS heads to New York for the world's first preview of *Grand Theft Auto IV*! We'll reveal everything you're dying to know about the biggest sequel in history!



- Exclusive new PS3 reviews including *Ghost Recon 2*, *Saints Row*, *Rainbow Six Vegas*, *Oblivion*, *Armored Core 4* and more!
- Massive preview on the highly anticipated *Assassin's Creed*
- Exclusive first look at the ambitious new *Tony Hawk* game!

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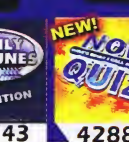
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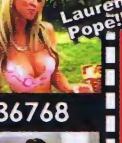
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- 14171 Dancing Christina!



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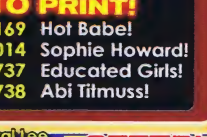
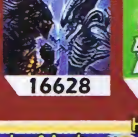
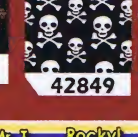
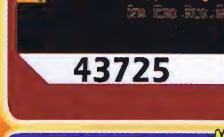
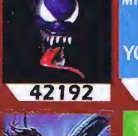
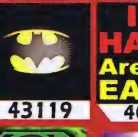
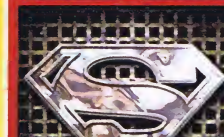


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NELLY FURTADO	Say It Right	42593 42547
FRAY	How To Save A Life	36736 36734
FERGIE	Fergalicious	40944 41191
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